THE DOCTRINE OF THE SAINTS INFIRMITIES.

Delivered in severall Sermons by

JOHN PRESTON
Doctor in Divinity, Maister of Emanuell Colledge in CAMBRIDGE.

and late Preacher of Lincolnes Inne, &c.

Imprinted at *London* by *I. Okes*, for *H. Taunton*, and are to be sold at his shop in S. *Dunstons* Church-yard in Fleet-street. 1638.

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To the Learned and Religious Gentleman *Henry Lawrence* Esquire.

Worthy Sir, although your owne native worth might iustly draw from us a greater testimony of obseruance, then the putting of this Little Treatise into your hand: yet haue we beene rather heereunto induced, by the consideration of such adornments of Wisdome, Learning and Piety in you, as had expresse Relation to the Author, and may seeme to be the fruits and issues of his Labours in your younger yeares. It is true indeed, that the goodnesse of the Soile adds much unto the greatnesse of the Crop: but it is as true, that the industry and wisedome of the Husband-man addes also much unto the goodnesse of the Soile: yet neither of these without a gracious influense from Heaven bring forth a harvest.

It hath pleased God, there should be extant diuers Monuments whereby the Authors eminent abilities do yet survive in the hearts and esteeme of men: yet none expresse him more unto the life, then the piety and vertue of those that grew up an-

der him, 1. Thess. 3. 8. He lives if they stand fast in the Lord. Among whom, as you had a greater intimacy of all the nearest, not of a Pupill, but of a Bosom-friend, and continuall Companion, and therein a longer time: so have you answered it, as then in love and Respect unto him, so since in a proportionable and happy improvement of what you did Receive.

And therefore, as we conceived, it would be a derogation iniurious to your candid and ingenious disposition, to thinke you unwilling to be put in mind of him, by whose Religious care you were so often put in mind of God, and of your selfe: So also an unworthy and ungratfull dis-respect, to have omitted the inscription of your name: especially by us, who long have beene and are

Your loving and obliged friends.

Thomas Goodwin,
Thomas Ball.

[redacted]

SERMONS

BY

IOHN PRESTON Doctor of Divinity.

2. Chron. 30. 18, 19, 20.

18. *For a Multitude of the people, even many of* Ephraim, *and* Manasseh, Issachar, *and* Zebulon, *had not cleansed themselves; yet did they eat the Passeover otherwise than it was* [redacted] Hezekiah *prayed for them saying, The good Lord pardon every one.*

19. *That prepareth his heart to seeke God, the Lord God of his Fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the Sanctuary.*

20. *And the Lord harkned to* Hezekiah, *and healed the people.*

UPon the occasion of these words was the illegality of some resorters to the Passeover at this Time, for this solemne Duty having beene long neglected, by occasion of the negligence of former

Governors : *Hezekiah* ſends his meſſengers not onely into *Iuda*, but alſo into into *Iſrael*, to aſſemble them, if it were poſſible, unto this great *Solemnity*, which was effected with various ſucceſſe, for in ſome places they were entertain'd with ſcoffes; in others, with great readineſſe to ſubmit themſelves unto this Sacred ordinance; but the warning being ſhort, & journy long, there were many wanted legall cleanſing; *Hezekiah* ſeeing the promptnes of the people, & that in the ſubſtance of the Duty they had not failed, puts up this Prayer to almighty God, in their behalfe.

In which Prayer we have theſe three things to be conſidered, and underſtood.

1. The ſubſtance of it, which was, that God would pardon, or be mercifull.

2. The Perſons for whom he made it, and they are deſcribed two waies.

1. From the preparation of their ſoules and inward man, they prepared their whole hearts.

2. From the imperfections of their outward and legall preparations, they were not cleanſed according to the purification of the Sanctuary.

3. The ſucceſſe and iſſue that it had, which was the healing of the people, that is, God bleſſed that ordinance of his for the removal of that outward guilt, contracted by thoſe ceremoniall neglects, or otherwiſe, & for the ſtrengthning of their ſoules in grace and holineſſe, and for the curing of their outward eſtate, which lay open at this time to many preſſures and calamities on every ſide. The points of Doctrine might be many that would hence

hence arise, but we doe purpose onely to handle two.

Doct. 1. 1. That in all the parts of publicke worship and performances, the Lord especially requires and expects the heart be right; he would have nothing wanting, but of all the rest he would not have the heart imperfect, or defective, the good Lord (saies this good King) be mercifull to every one that prepareth his whole heart to seeke the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed, that is, though he be in other things imperfect and defective: So *Solomon*, this good Kings predecessor, *Prov.* 4.33. *Keep thy heart with all diligence*, thy *foot* is not to be neglected, *Eccl.* 5.1. but to be kept, but not with so much care and circumspection as the heart, that part must not be wāting, whatever other parts were; and therefore if any were in this defective, *Hezekiah* praies not for them.

Reas. 1. 1. Because the heart is that which God himselfe doth most delight in, no duty can be well performed were God himselfe doth not vouchsafe his presence and assistance. *Heb.* 13.15. *By him therfore let us offer the Sacrifice of praise to God continually*, that is, by his assistance and gracious presence, but where there is not a heart to receive and entertain God in, he never will, nor doth afford his presence. *Esa.* 66.1,2, *Heaven is my throne, and the earth my foot-stoole, &c.* But to this man will I look, even to him that is poore, and of a contrite heart, according to that of the *Psa.* 51.17. *The Sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, &c.*

Though to the eye of men it may seeme a

despicable and meane abode, for such a glorious and excellent Majesty, yet sure it is not so by him accounted: when a great man is to be received into our houses, we are carefull that there bee no breaches in them; but when the great and glorious God is to be received into our hearts, he will not stumble at the wounds and breaches.

Reason 2. The heart is that onely part, whereby God estimates, and makes a judgement of the whole, hee takes measure of a man by his heart; if that bee sound and upright, he never curiously examines other parts; we commonly are taken with the face and countenance, because we are not able to looke deeper, but God regards not that, as being able to descend into the secret closet of the heart. 1. *Sam.* 16.6,7. And he looked on *Eliab*, and said, *Surely the Lords annointed is before him.* But the Lord said unto *Samuel*, *Looke not on his countenance, nor on the height of of his stature, because I have refused him; for the Lord seeth not as a man seeth; For man looketh on the outward appearance; but the Lord seeth the heart:* And accordingly yee have the doome of almost all the Kings of *Iudah*, according to the goodnesse or badnesse of their hearts 2. *Chron.* 25.2. *He did that which was right in the sight of God, but not with a perfect heart:* And the like is also testified of many other of them.

Reason 3. 3. The heart is the hardest piece to manage and mannre, and therefore he that keepes that well in tune, is not likely to be wanting in the other: if in a Violl, I finde the trebble string in tune; I make no question of the base that goes not out so easily:

Symon

Symon Magus had composed the other parts, *Act.* 8. 13. *He did believe, and was baptized*: but this string was out of tune, the Apostle finds this jarring ver. 21. *Thou hast neither part nor lot in this business, for thy heart is not right in the sight of God*, in his own sight no question but he thought it so, but it was not so in Gods sight: And indeed the heart is so deceitfull, that it will deceive the very owner and possessor of it: like to your Jugglers, that will do a thing before your face, and yet you shall not see them doe it, 2. *King.* *Why weepeth my Lord* (saith Hazael) *why* (saies the Prophet) *for the grievous ill that I know thou wilt doe unto the Children of Israel, their strong holds thou wilt set on fire, &c.* And *Hazael* said, *Is thy servant a dogge, that he should doe this great thing?* There were characters of cruelty engraven on his heart, which himself had never read, or beene acquainted yet withall, *who knoweth* (saith the Apostle) 1. *Cor.* 2. 11. *the things of a man, but the spirit of man that is within him?* One would thinke a man should read his owne hand, yet some doe write so bad, that they cannot reade it when they have done, and so did *Hazael*, he had hatcht such cursed thoughts within him, that he could not see to the utmost termines and end of them: if a man hath a spot upon his face, he is warned of it by every body else, because its knowne he cannot see it; but he may have a thousand spots upon his heart, and neither he, nor no man in the world beside be able to discover it: he therefore that hath well prepared this part, will hardly be defective in the rest.

Reas. 4. 4. The heart is the spring and first wheele of all that curious Clock-worke of the soule; so that if that be but ordered and kept aright, it will direct and order all the rest, & this is the reason that the Holy Ghost is pleased for to give, *Prov.* 4. 23. *Out of it are the issues of life:* If a man had a Well or Fountaine in his garden, out of which came all the liquors which he used, he had need to be very diligent to keep that clean, if that were poisoned, it would be hard for himselfe long to escape. Now the heart is such a Fountaine, *Rom.* 10. 10. *With the heart man believeth to righteousnesse, and from within, even out of the heart proceede evill thoughts, &c. Mar.* 7. 21. the *Gentiles* were accounted common and prophane before Christs time, but after their hearts were purified, even *Peter* himselfe, the Apostle of the Circumcision, durst venture on them, *Acts* 15. 9. *For God put no difference betweene them and the Iewes, after that by faith he had purified their hearts*: give me never so bad a man, make but his heart right, and I dare venture to close with him; if yee take out the Serpents sting, he may be played with, or otherwise imployed, without either danger, or other inconvenience.

Vse. Let us every one be hence incouraged to examine well, and looke unto our hearts; for if they be any way disordered and out of tune, our actions and performances will not be relished. Remember what the Apostle saith, *Heb.* 3. 12. *Take heede brethren lest there bee in any of you an evill heart of unbeliefe, to depart from the living God*; an unbele-

unbeleeving and evill heart will evermore be drawing back from God, will not come at him by its good wil, *Mat.* 15.8,9. *They honor me with their lips, but their hearts are removed far from me.* And what then became of all their worship? why surely it came to nothing, *In vaine they worship me:* A heartlesse worship is a worship that God regards not; but if the heart be framed and prepared as it should be, God looks not at the many imperfections that may be found in circumstantiall matters.

But it will be here demanded, how one may know when his heart is truely qualified and fitted for a duty. *Quest.*

When he is perswaded of a speciall, and peculiar eye of God upon him in the duty, that God in a speciall manner doth behold him, & observe him how he doth it, he must beleeve that God is at his Elbow, *Heb.* 11.6. He that commeth to God, must beleeve that *God* is, that is, must have his heart delivered from that blindnesse, wherein by nature all mens hearts remaine. What was the reason that the Gentiles, even in their solemne worship of their gods, were so abhominable oftentimes? because their hearts were darke and blind in spirituall and celestial matters, *Rom.* 1.21,22,23. *Their foolish hearts were darkned, and then they changed the truth of God into a lye, and worshipped the Creature in stead of the Creator, &c.* But when the heart is seriously convinced that God is present, records and registers all our deportments whatsoever; it makes us circumspect and carefull, even those that are otherwise regardlesse of their duties; yet *Answ.*

yet when their maſters eye is upon them will conſider what they doe: and therefore the Apoſtle requires of Chriſtian ſervants more. *Eph.* 6.6. Becauſe the Heathen would doe thus much, the very Aſſe, when ſhe ſaw the Angel in the paſſage, behaves her ſelfe accordingly, *Numb.* 22.23. If a man would therefore know, whether his heart be fitted and prepared for any duty, let him ſeriouſly examine, whether he is thus perſwaded of the ſpeciall eye of God upon him in it.

2. The heart is then prepared for a duty and ſervice unto God, when it is ſequeſtred and taken off from other things: when the droſſe and ſtaine of naturall ſelfe-love, and earthly mindednesſe is gotten out: as we ſee, men bring not filthy veſſels unwaſhed, and uncleanſed to their Maſters table. Ye may ſee, perhaps, an impure and filthy veſſell in the Kitchin, but upon the table it is not tolerable. Thoſe men that came to the Paſſeover, although not waſhed according to the purification of the Sanctuary, yet were, no queſtion purged inwardly: they had, no doubt, a ſubſtantiall, though not a Ceremoniall cleanſing, according to that of the Apoſtle, 2 *Tim.* 2.21. *If a man doe therefore purge himſelfe from theſe, he ſhall be a veſſell unto honour, ſanctified, and meet for the Maſters uſe, and prepared unto every good worke.*

There's none of us would have our meat come up upon a dirty Diſh, and much leſſe God. When *David* asked for ſome holy Shew-bread from the Prieſts, he tells them withall, that the veſſels of the yong men that were to carry it, were holy, 1 *Sam.* 21.5.

21:5. So must our hearts be, when we adventure to draw neare to God: And though we cannot here attaine a perfect purity, but that corruption will still be minglep with our best performances, yet that must be removed and laid aside, that kept us backe from turning to the Lord: the rubbish of necessity must be removed, that stops the building from going on, 1 *Pet.* 1.22.23. Seeing yee have purified your soules to the obedience of the truth, unto unfeigned love of the brethren, &c. Being borne againe, &c. That is, seeing that originall impurity, that blocked up the soule from turning unto God is done away, the heapes of Mucke and rubbish, that stood where now the building is erected; for that's done alwaies at the first conversion of the soule to God, and never fully doth returne.

3. When it is softned, and fitted to receive impressions: when the Centurion by much dejection and prostration of his soule to God in secret, had his heart so mollified, that any thing would make a Character or Print: He tells *Peter*, He was ready to heare whatsoever God should be pleased to speake, *Acts* 10.33. It's not enough that the mettall be refined and purged from the drosse, that before did cleave unto it: unlesse it likwise be so softned, as that it will accommodate it selfe unto the mold, or stamp it shall be cast into: and therefore it is powred into that while it is soft and liquid. So the Apostle *Rom.* 6.17. argues, they now were truely freed from the dominion and power of their former unregenerate estate, because their

Hearts did yeeld unto the ſtamp that was imprinted on them, Εἰς ὃν παρεδόθητε τύπον διδαχῆς. As the mettall then is judged to be ſufficiently continued in the Furnace, when it willingly receives the forme and figure of that which it is caſt and powred into. Thus *Paul* was melted by the Sunne of Righteouſneſſe, that ſhone into his ſoule when he was going upon other errands, *Acts* 9.6. And he trembling, and aſtoniſhed, ſaying, Lord what wilt thou have me for to doe? as if he ſhould have ſaid, This fire of thy love hath now ſo thawed and melted my obdurate and kicking ſoule, that it is prepared for any mould, to receive what print ſoever thou ſhalt be pleaſed to ſtamp upon it: put me into whatſoever ſhape thou wilt, I am now ready for any mould; to bee a Preacher, that have beene a perſecutor; to ſuffer my ſelfe, that have beene the cauſe of ſo much ſuffering to others formerly; and therefore no marvaile, if the Lord profeſſeth he would looke to ſuch a-lone, *Iſaiah* 66.2. becauſe onely ſuch are fitted to be wrought upon; whereas unbroken and unmollified ſpirits ſubmit to nothing, but the Word is as water ſpilt upon the Rocke, that makes no manner of impreſſion.

4. The heart is then prepared for a duty, when it makes the duty but a bridge to lead him unto God, when it reſts not in the deed, but paſſeth by it, and through it to God: Ye have many very frequent in the outward acts of duty, will heare, and pray, and faſt, and preach perhaps; yet raiſe their ſoules no higher than the outward act alone.

Hoſ-

*Hoſ.*7.14. And they have not cryed unto me with their hearts, when they howled upon their beds: Therefore not with their hearts, becauſe not unto me, or at leaſt, with their hearts well qualified, and fitted for that holy duty: There were ſome (it may be) among theſe people that came unto the Paſſeover to pleaſe the King, becauſe the King was pleaſed to have it ſo, and ſo they ſhould, but if they reſted there, and went no further, their ſervice would not be accepted, neither were they included in *Hezekiah's* Prayer; for hee onely prayes for them that ſought the Lord God of their Fathers; not that ſought the face of the Ruler, or the favour of this godly King, or any other bie and carnall end. So *Eſa.*55.6. Seeke the Lord while he may be found. The duty is ordained to draw and allure the ſoule to God, no more but an opportunity that God and men may trade, and have commerce with one another: As *Solomon* did therefore build the glorious Temple to the Lord, that he might dwell with men: 2.*Chron.*7.12. But now if any reſted in that Temple, and went no higher, he had no intereſt in any promiſe that was made unto it; for the condition of the promiſe was, that they ſhould ſeek his face. *ver.*14. *If my people, which are called by my name, ſhall humble themſelves, and pray, and ſeeke my face, and turne from their wicked way: Then will I heare from heaven, and will forgive their ſinne, and will heale their Land: If they ſhall humble themſelves, and pray, and ſeeke my face,* but if they praied never ſo much, and in their prayers had only reſpect and

aime unto themselves, he would not heare them: It is a strange expression of the Prophet *Amos* 5. 25.26. Have yee offered unto me sacrifice, and offerings in the wildernesse, by the space of forty yeares O yee house of *Israel*? Why what did they with the Tabernacle, and all their furniture? but accommodate their publicke service in the wildernesse, no, saies God, You did it to your selves; your ends and aimes were carnall, sensuall, and earthly in it, and you had no profit by it, as neither have many now a daies; for want of disposing and preparing of their hearts for God aright. And so we have done with the first poynt observed from the Text.

We are now to come unto the latter part, and reason of this holy mans request, which was their not being cleansed according to the purification of the Sanctuary, which was a legall barre and let to stop them from the Passeover, how upright and sincere soever they were: Wherefore he labours by earnest prayer to remove this barre and great impediment, and the Lord expresseth here his willingnesse to be intreated; for the Lord heard his prayer, and healed the people, whence this will follow.

Doct. 2. Where there is uprightnes & sincerity of heart, Infirmities do not exclude from mercy, this is apparant in the Text, for he praies for mercy, and hath it granted, although they were not qualified as God required, and may be further proved.

Reason 1. From the wisedome of God, who knowes what we can doe, and will expect no more; as a wise

wise parent will not looke so much from a weake child, as from a strong; nor from a sicke servant, as from a healthfull; it is his wisedome to consider what we are, and accordingly to deale with us; and therefore we may be sure that he will not cast us off for our infirmities, but as a Father beares with his sonne that feares him, though hee spies many faults in him: Like as a father pittieth his children, so the *Lord* pittieth them that feare him. For he knoweth our frame, he remembreth that we are but dust. *Psal.* 103. 13, 14. So the Lord hath compassion on them that feare him: Why? because he knowes whereof we are made, he remembreth that we are but dust. So we see, that when the *Israelites* had so provoked God, that he could scarce hold his hand off them; yet he staid his hand, even then when he was ready to strike. And many times, saith the Text, *Psal.* 78. 38, 39. But he being full of compassion, forgave their iniquities, and destroied them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up his wrath; For hee remembred that they were but flesh, and that they were even a wind that passeth away, and commeth not againe. He called back his anger because he remembred that they were but flesh. And herein God shewes his wisedome, and we ours: A wise man lookes for no more of his servant than he is able to doe: but on the contrary, a foolish man expects as much from a weaker, as from a stronger, and falls presently upon him if he does not as much: So we our selves shew our wisedome in other things; as for example.

If there were a little Gold and much droſſe mingled together; A wiſe man will not for the droſſe ſake caſt away the gold, but purifie and tryе it: So if we have corne, although there be ſome cockle in it, yet a wiſe husband-man will not reject it, but winnow it, and purge it.

So God being a wiſe God, doth not caſt us off preſently for our infirmities, if there be any truth and ſincerity in us: And as God is wiſe, ſo compaſſionate, and beares with our infirmities.

The Taſk-maſters wanted compaſſion, and therefore expected more from the *Iſraelites* than they were able to doe: So whilſt we were under the Law, there was a burthen laid upon us, which neither we nor our Fathers could beare; but now if we be once under grace, the Lord doth not lay ſuch loads upon us: But if there bee truth in the heart, he accepts of our endeavours, although accompanied with many weakneſſes.

Reaſon 2. A ſecond reaſon is taken from the covenant, for ſo long as a man is in the covenant, his infirmities cannot cut him off from Gods mercy. Now it is certaine, we may have many infirmities, and the covenant remaine unbroken: for every ſinne doth not breake the covenant, but thoſe that untye the marriage knot: As in marriage every offence doth not diſannull the marriage, but onely the breach of thy marriage vow: to wit, Adultery: So onely here thoſe ſinnes that breake the covenant, which untie the marriage knot, (as it were) and that is;

1 Firſt, when we take any new Maſter, and this we

we do when we let any ſinne reigne in our hearts, if we ſet up any ſin that commands and rules us; then the covenant is broken, for thou haſt choſen a new Maſter.

Secondly, if we take another husband; and this we doe, when we make a league with ſinne; if we bee in league with any thing in the World, that doth draw our hearts from God, doth break our covenant in choſing another Husband. But other failings doe not breake the covenant, and whiles it remaines in force, we have intereſt in Gods mercies, for he cannot forget his covenant; which if he ſhould, yet Chriſt is the Mediator, and would put him in minde of it. 2

A third reaſon is drawn from the common condition of all the Saints: Take all the Saints that ever lived, and every one of them have had infirmities. Now if God ſhould be too extreame to marke our iniquiries, (*Pſal.* 130, 3, 4.) who ſhould ſtand? If God ſhould caſt off all that have infirmities, then none ſhould be ſaved, and then wherfore hath Chriſt dyed? But ſaith the Pſalmiſt: Mercy is with thee, therefore thou art to be feared: That is, if God were ſo ſevere a Maſter, that he would endure no failing, then he ſhould have no ſervants: But it is his mercy that makes him to be feared. And thus we ſee, that infirmities do not cut us off from Gods mercy, if we be ſound at the heart; but withall we muſt remember theſe two Cautions. *Reaſon 3.*

First, though infirmities doe not utterly exclude us from the mercies of God, yet they may bring upon *Caution 1.*

upon us many and sore afflictions, and hinder us of many blessings: and here we must remember these distinctions.

1. First, there is a voluntary infirmity, which proceedes from our owne wills; and by how much the more will is an infirmity, by so much the more God is provoked to anger, and to punish and afflict us.

But there is another infirmity which ariseth from some impediment which a man would faine remove, but he cannot. As for example: A man would faine remember all he heareth, but he cannot, because his memory is fraile, and he cannot helpe it; he would convert many to God, but he cannot, because he hath weake parts. He would faine have such a lust removed, but God doth not please to set his Spirit at liberty, though he doe his uttermost endeavour, for that must still be remembred; for if a man sayes he would pray fervently morning and evening, and yet sits still, and doth not set upon the duty and strive to doe it; this is the act of the sluggard: So also in other things.

2. Secondly, there is an infirmity that ariseth from want of growth, for there are some Babes in Christ, some buddes that are but tender, even as a tree hath some buds and sprouts as well as branches: and these suck sap from the tree, as well as the branches. Now God beares much with those that are such, and will not presently punish them for their failings; he will not in this case quench the smoaking Flaxe, nor breake the bruised

bruised Reed: he will not put new wine into old vessels: hee knowes there is much of the old man still in them, and therefore will not enjoyne them to such great duties as they are not able to performe; he will not put too much on them at the first: hee commands us not to reject or despise those that are weak, *Rom.* 14.13. *Let us not therefore judge one another any more, but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block, or an occasion to fall in his brothers way.* And sure then himselfe will practise that rule that he prescribes to us.

But now there are other infirmities that arise from sicknes, in those that have beene strong, and through some distempers are become sick, and are fallen from their first love, as in the 2 of the *Rev.* 2.4,5. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love: remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and doe thy first works; or else I will come come unto the quickly, and will remove thy Candlestick out of his place, except thou repent; Or that arise from some desertion, themselves being then causes of it, by reason of presumption, as in *Peter* and *Hezekiah*: Now in this case God doth not beare with a man, but will come against him quickly, and will not stay long, unlesse they repent, and doe their first workes.

We must remember, that to some, God hath appointed a lesser stature in grace, and to others greater: there are Christians of all sizes, as it were. Now those that are of the least size, they are the weakest, and these are generally weake, that 3

is, they are weake in their understandings, weake in affections, weake in all; and with these God beares much: as we may see in the Church of *Thyatira*, Rev. 2. 24, 25. But unto you I say, and unto all the rest of *Thyatira*, as many as have not this Doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Sathan, as they speake: I will put upon you none other burthen, but that which you have already, hold fast till I come. There were some that were expert, and others that were weake. Now for those, saith God, that have not this learning, neither have known the deepnesse of Satan, I doe not require so much of you; but onely that you hold fast that which yee have.

4 Fourthly, but now there is another infirmity, which doth not runne in generall over the whole man, but is some particular infirmity, which is in a man that is strong, and hath attained a greater measure of grace: As a body may be strong, and have some particular weakenesse; and a wall may be strong, yet have some weake parts: so a Christian may have strong lusts: some particular infirmities; as indulgencies to his Children, or pride, or any other, so then this rule is true, That strong infirmities bring strong afflictions: as wee see it did in *Eli*, for his indulgency, and so in *David*, he had strong & long afflictions, for his strong lusts.

5 Fifthly, weare to remember, that there is an infirmity in a man that he is sensible of, and strives against it with all his might, and yet cannot get victory over it: God may suffer a man to labour and tugge, and yet prosper nothing by his paines, but

but gives him grace which is sufficient for him; he gives his pardoning grace, though not his prevailing grace. 2. *Cor.* 12. 9. In this case God will beare much, though he cannot get the victory, yet he may get pardon.

Sixthly, but there is another infirmity that befalls us in peace and prosperity, that we are not sensible of, but are as it were in a sleepe, and forget our selves, and so let some infirmity steale upon us: and in this case, though it will not quite cut us off from Gods mercy, yet it will bring some great affliction upon us, whereby God doth waken us, and bring us unto our selves againe: So he dealt with *Hezekiah*; no sooner was hee settled in peace and prosperity, but presently hee forgets himselfe, suffers pride to steale upon him, for which we know how the Lord awaked him. So *David*, *Psal.* 30. when he was in prosperity, thought he should never be removed; but then God hides his face, and makes him looke about him; therefore we must remember this caution: 6

That though infirmities do not cut us off from Gods mercies; yet if voluntary infirmities in which our wil hath a hand, if such as are not from weakneſſe, and want of growth, but from sicknes, if they bee some particular weakneſſe in a strong *Christian*, if they steale upon us by our owne sloth, and wee are not aware, nor sensible of them; then they will bring upon us some great crosse and affliction, and hinder us of some great blessings.

The second Caution is, that yee take heed that *Caution* 2.

yee do not mistake those infirmities that proceed from the regenerate part, for those sins that proceede from the unregenerate: for these latter are rebellions, not infirmities, they are wickednesses, not weaknesses; and therefore we must beware, that we doe not mistake the one for the other.

To this purpose, it will be needfull to know what an infirmity is, and this we may doe by the contrary, if we consider what strength is.

Now for this we must know, that there is a two-fold strength.

First, a naturalll strength.

Secondly, a supernaturall.

1 First, a naturall strength is that, by which wee performe the worke of nature; this in it selfe is neither pleasing, nor displeasing to God, but as a Cypher, when it stands by it selfe is nothing, but a figure being set before it, it increaseth the sum: so this naturall strength neither pleaseth God, nor displeaseth, but as it is in a regenerate man, or unregenerate man, so it helpes or hurts.

2 Secondly, there is a supernaturall strength, by which we are enabled to doe more than nature could helpe us to, and this is either for evill, or good things. First, there is a supernatural strength that tends to evill, when as to the naturall, Sathan addes a supernaturall, to enable men to evill: such a strength have they who dyed for *Turcisme*, and the like, who kill Kings, &c. see how the Apostle sets out this, 2. *Thes.* 2. 9, 10.

Such a strength have they that write, and dispute against the truth, they have the strength of

mad

mad men, which wee say, are three men strong: So likewise there is a supernatural weaknes, when to natural imbecility there is a superadded weaknesse: in the 8 of *Luk.* 12, there we see that the first ground forgat the Word: why? through weaknes onely? No, but Sathan he helpes on, He comes, & takes away the Word, &c. And so we read of a more than naturall inapтnesse to receive the Gospel, 2. *Cor.* 4. 34. *The divel puts to his hand, hee blinds their eyes, that the light of the Gospel should not shine to them:* He helpes forward the naturall weaknesse.

Secondly, there is a supernaturall strength to do good, as Christ bad his Disciples to stay at *Ierusalem*, till they were endued with strength from above *Luk.* 24. 49. because they were to enter upon a great worke, above naturall strength, to wit, to preach the Gospel, therefore they had need have strength above nature, because they were to preach the Gospell. This supernaturall strength we may know by this, it wil enable us to doe more than nature can, it over-flies the reach of nature, or mortality, or common grace: nature can doe as much as lyes in her power, or as is her worke: but there are some things which nature, though never so well refined, can never reach unto. As Iron can doe as much as in Iron, if it bee made bright, and fit for those several uses it serves unto: But if you would have this Iron to turne to the North, it cannot doe it, till it be touched with the Load-stone, & hath a higher quality added to it. So take the purest water, and it can doe

what is in the power of water; it can moysten, coole, descend, or the like: but if you would have water to heat, to ascend, it must be by a supernaturall power, and by a super-added vertue. And so take nature, and let it be refined with more vertues, and common graces, and it can doe as much as is in nature. But if you would have it love God, or some such higher worke, it cannot doe it; the water riseth no higher than the spring from whence it came: So naturall men can ascend no higher than nature; and therefore for workes of a higher reach, there must be strength from above to performe them.

Quest. But what are those things which nature cannot superficially enable a man to doe?

Answ. Take the best of the heathen, or the best natural man, and meere nature cannot enable him to doe these things following.

1 First, it cannot bring him to this, to prefer God before himselfe upon this perswasion, that his well-being doth depend more on God, than on himselfe.

2 Secondly, it cannot enable a man to see sinne, as the greatest evill in the world, and so to hate it, and to looke upon Christ, as the greatest good in the world, and so to embrace him.

3 Thirdly, nature cannot make a man resolute, not to part with Christ upon any tearmes, but willing rather to beare the greatest persecutions on the one side, and to refuse the greatest offers on the other side, than to part with his Christ.

4 Fourthly, nature cannot make a man love God, for

for this is a distinguishing property of a godly man, and so are all the other affections, now a naturall man cannot hate sinne, cannot grieve for wickednesse, as abhomination to God: Take this for a rule, that howsoever naturall men may know much, and doe much, yet they have no spirituall affection; they have no spirituall love, hatred, griefe, or joy.

A fifth thing which nature cannot doe, and which this supernaturall strength doth, is this, it overcomes and subdues the lustings of our owne spirits, and that not by restraint, but putting in it a contrary lusting; the spirit lusts against the flesh; this supernaturall strength of the spirit, it hems us about, it comprehends and keepes us: *Act.* 20. 22. Behold I goe bound in the Spirit (saith St. *Paul*) to *Ierusalem*: When a mans owne spirit would fall loose, this supernaturall strength staies and strengthens it; when God leaves any of the Saints to nakednesse and emptinesse of his owne spirit, he becomes as another man: as it was said of *Samson*, they become weake as water, as we see in *Elias*, *David*, and *Peter*. But when this supernatural strength is within us, it sits at the stern and guides us, and carries us through all. Now then if thou findest that thou hast any strength in thee more than naturall, though it be but a little, all thy infirmities shall not exclude thee from the mercies of God in Christ. 5

Vse. Is it so? be not then discouraged for any of thy infirmities, but come boldly to the throne of grace: it is a great fault in Christians, if because

of

of such, or such an infirmity they bee kept from the throne of grace, or weaken their assurance:
Iob.27.56. It was the commendation of *Iob*, who (notwithstanding all his infirmities) would not let go his righteousnesse.

Looke upon *Asa*, his infirmities were many, as to imprison the Prophet; to trust to the Physitian more than God, &c. Yet because there was an upright heart, see what testimony the Lord gives him in the 2 *Chron.* 14.2. The like in *Iehoshaphat*. So *David* had many foule infirmities, yet because sound at the heart, God cals him, A man after his owne heart. So *Sarah* (notwithstanding her infirmities) is commended as a patterne to wives. 1. *Pet.* 3. 6. *Rahab*, her infirmities are passed over, and she commended for her good workes. *Iames* 2. *Heb.* 11. And therefore (notwithstanding our infirmities) let us trust perfectly in the grace of Jesus Christ, and if we see they doe abound, let us lay the more on Christ, as needing his helpe the more.

Vse 2. The second use is from the first Caution, seeing infirmities though they doe not cut us off from Gods mercy, yet they may bring upon us many troubles; therefore let us take heede of them; it is not a small matter to bee subject to infirmities: so it was but an infirmity in *Rebeckah* and *Iacob*, to compasse the blessing by indirect meanes.

But consider what it cost him, a great deale of grieve and paine; And see how deare *Davids* infirmities did cost him: So *Moses*, when he distrusted God, God would not suffer him to goe into the

the Land of *Canaan* these were all great afflictions, which their infirmities brought upon them, though they did not cast them out of Gods favour; therefore if we would avoyd such troubles, let us beware of living under infirmities.

The third use is from the second Caution, that we doe not mistake rebellion and wickednes, for infirmities and weakneſſe. Now seeing wee may easily be deceived, let us try and examine our selves narrowly; for it is the use of men to shroud themselves under infirmities, they say, their meaning is good, &c. but its their infirmity. And on the other side, many are upright in heart, and because they have infirmities, they thinke they have no grace, and therfore we had need to judge both with righteous judgement. *Use* 3.

Now to helpe you in your tryall, consider first what an infirmity is: Secondly the signes of it.

First, an infirmity is such a weakneſſe, as when the heart is upright, yet by reason of some impediment, it cannot doe that good it would, and doth the evill it would not. So that there must be first uprightneſſe of heart, else it is not an infirmity, but iniquity; the heart must be perfect with God in all things, there must bee a purpose to please God in all.

Secondly, the reason that it cannot doe so, is from some impediment that hinders: and this ariseth from the rebellion of his flesh, which leads him captive, makes him omit the good that hee would doe, and doe the evill he would not. 2

But now secondly to come to the notes and

characters; for a carnall man and a godly man, both be guilty of one and the same infirmities, as to have their hearts wandring in prayer, in reading, and to idlenes in their calling, &c. Yet these may be wickednesse in the one, but weaknesse in the other; and therefore to know this, consider these signes.

Signe. First, if it be an infirmity it continues not, but assaults thee by fits, and starts, & so away; and afterwards thou wilt returne to thy former course: as a stone that is throwne up, it flies as long as the force of the hand that threw it remains; but after it takes its owne course againe: but if it continue upon thee, it is signe that it is naturall to thee: As a stone, it rests upon the earth, because it is the naturall place of it: my meaning is not, but that an infirmity may assault a man all his life, for so some may, as we shall shew afterwards: But I say, it comes by fits, and so is gone. This we see in *David*, in *Peter*, and the rest of the Saints, that their infirmities continued not so, but that afterwards the returned to their course againe.

2 Secondly, when a man amends not upon admonition, it is a signe it is not an infirmity; if a man intends to goe to such a place, and one should meete him, and tell him, this is not the way, and direct him in the right way, hee would thanke him, and returne into the right way, because that is the way he intended to goe. So if your faces be set towards Jerusalem, and one should tel you, here you went out of the way, yee would be glad of it, and returne.

So

So it was with *David*, when hee would have ſlaine *Nabal* in a paſſion, and *Abigal* met him, and ſtayed him: oh how thankfull he was to God, and her! it was a ſigne it was but an infirmity: and ſo in the caſe of *Vriah*, when *Nathan* told him, hee was in the wrong: *Prov.* 25. 12. He that reproveth the wiſe and obedient, it is as a golden eare-ring, or as an ornament of gold, ſaith *Solomon*; that is, he whoſe heart is upright, whoſe intent is to grow rich in grace, accounts of thoſe that reprove him, as of golden ornaments: But if a man after admonition and reproſe will take his owne courſe, it is a ſigne of his wickedneſſe, and not infirmity.

Againe, thirdly a ſinne of infirmity is alwaies with griefe and ſorrow of heart for that weaknes; now what is griefe, but the endeavour and ſtrife of the will; when a man cannot attaine to that he would, or would ſhun ſomething he cannot avoyd, then he is grieved and payned: As it is in the body, all the griefe there, is when a part or member cannot performe its office or function: So in the ſoule, when it would faine doe ſuch a thing, when the deſire of the minde is ſet on ſuch, or ſuch an object, and it cannot attaine it, then followes griefe: ſo here, when the heart is drawn up to pleaſe God in all things, and ſomething comes in the way that it cannot, and therefore it is grieved, and therefore in the 2 *Cor.* 10. 11. the Apoſtle makes this ſorrow a ground of their uprightneſſe, and it is certaine, where this griefe is not mingled, it is no infirmity. 3

4 Every sinne of Infirmity, produceth a hearty complaint, and an earnest desire, and a serious endeavour to have it cured; for every Infirmity in a body that is quickned, that hath some life in it, & so is sensible of it. As in a disease that a man is sensible of, he tels his friends, or any other that hee is in company with, of it, to see if they can help him; if they cannot, he complains to the Physitian, and goes to him to have it cured. So in an Infirmity or sicknesse of the soule; an upright heart complayns to his Christian friends, I have such an Infirmity, what shal I do to cure it? if they cannot help him, he runs to him that hath the balme of *Gilead*, to Jesus Christ to have it cured, 2. *Cor.* 12. 8, 9. This was so in St. *Paul*, hee prayed three times that it might be removed, he doth not onely complaine, as in the 7. of the *Rom.* 24. and desire that it may be healed, as in the forenamed place; where he praies against it, but to this he ads a serious endeavour, 1 *Cor.* 16. 27. he beates downe his body, &c. that is, he used all good meanes for the overcomming of this infirmity: and where this complaint, desire, and endeavour is wanting, it is a signe it is not a mans Infirmity, but Iniquity.

5. *Signe.* Fiftly, if thy sin be a sin of Infirmity, thou shalt find in thy selfe a continuall reluctancy, and strife against it: for as there is in thee a body of sinne; so also a body of grace, which being contrary to the other, will not suffer thee to be at quiet; the spirit will be against the flesh, as well as the flesh against the spirit: and as the flesh will not suffer thee to doe a good duty without resisting, and interrupting

rupting thee, so neither will the spirit suffer thee to sin without striving against, and opposing it.

But if thou canst sit downe, and let it rest without striving against it, it is no infirmity, but rebellion, therfore try thy selfe by these signes.

But others, besides true Christians, are able to doe this; for take an unregenerate man, and hee will make the same plea for himselfe, that it is but an infirmity: indeede hee is overtaken sometimes, but it continues not; and when hee is admonished or reproved, hee findes his heart yeelde to it; and hee grieves and is sorry for it, hee complaines of it, and seekes to helpe it, and strives against it; and therefore these are not sure signes to distinguish him from another. *Objection 1.*

I answer, that there is something in an unregenerate man which is much like, and comes very neare to that in the regenerate man, he may doe much by that light he hath, but yet there is a broad difference between them: for the regenerate man hath another object about which hee is conversant, he hath a new light put into his heart, he is renewed in the spirit of his mind, and hee hath the Law written in his heart. 2. *Cor.* 3. 3. *Heb.* 8. 10. That is, all the spirituall duties that are written in the Law: and he hath something in his heart that answers to what is in the Law, as Tally answers to Tally, or as that fashion in the lead, to that in the mold, or as in a seale character answers to character, impression to impression; so that which is in the seale, the same is in the waxe: *Answ.*

So whatsoever is in the Law of righteousnesse, if you could see that which is written in the heart by Jesus Christ, you should see character for character, print for print, and so, that if there were not a written Law, he would be a Law unto himselfe to obey God, performe duties according to the Law written in his heart: Now when it stands thus with a man, and something, some impediment comes in the way, that he cannot serve God as he would, the law of his members rebelling against the Law of his minde, then this troubles and grieves him, this he complaines of, and strives against, and labours to have it mended.

Difference. But now a naturall man hath not the Law thus written in his heart, he hath all things revealed to him within his sphære, to wit, of nature, hee ascends no higher: and although hee hath good purposes and meanings, and grieves and complaines, yet all this is for sins committed against common light, against naturall conscience, against the second Table. Now this is in a lower sphære, they are sorry, but not godly sorrowfull, the cannot grieve for omission of spiritual duties, required in the first Table, and so wee see they are not pitcht on the same objects which makes a greater difference. Now for the further and fuller clearing of this poynt, we will answer some questions or cases.

Quest. 1. First, suppose I have striven long against such a lust, and done what I can, and yet cannot prevaile against it, shall I say this is an infirmity?

To

To this I answere, first, that we may be, and are often deceived in this; when we have striven long against it (yet we grow worse) and that the Infirmity gets ground of us; for an Infirmity may appeare to get strength, when as it loseth it. As when we cleanse a pond, it appears more muddy then it was before, though in truth it loseth mud more and more. Every contrary, the more it is resisted, the more it appeares: as fire, the more cold is about it, the hotter it is: so an Infirmity, the more it is resisted with the contrary grace, the more it appeares to prevaile, though in truth it loseth ground and strength. *Answ.*

And therefore secondly I give this Rule, that though you have striven, yet you must not leave off, but continue your striving still, and yet be content with Gods hand in suffering such an Infirmity in you: for there is a double contentment: First, that which is opposed to murmuring against Gods hand, and impatiency, and so we must be content to suffer an Infirmity on us: we must not repine at Gods proceedings. 2

Secondly, such a contentment, as is opposed to striving against the Infirmity, and so wee must not bee content to suffer it upon us, but must strive constantly against it: As in a naturall Disease we are to labour to have it cured: but if God will have it lye upon us, we must be content: So heere we should continually strive against our Infirmities; but if God see good to let it rest upon us, we must be content with his hand: For God doth it that wee might have something to humble

ble us, and Humility is the nurse of grace, without which, all grace would wither and decay.

And againe, the power of God rests and dwels in an upright heart, and that must have an empty place, and Humility makes roome for this, when the power of God dwels in us, when it begins to settle in a mans heart: If hee now begianne to grow up in conceite of himselfe, this expells the power of God, and crouds it out: and therefore God would have something to be in us, to keepe us in an humble condition. It is with us as with *Paul*, when he looked on his Infirmity, at the first he was impatient, would have no deniall at Gods hand, but have it removed; hee prayed thrice, that is, often, to this purpose. But when he saw it was a medicine, which he thought a poyson, that it served to Humble him, and by that meanes the power of God dwelt in him, then hee was content, and so should we.

3. *Answ.* Againe, thirdly I answere, suppose you do not get victory over your Infirmity, and you be no better than you were before, nay lose ground of it, yet strive still, for this strife makes you hold head against it, which otherwise you would not do: for if when you strive, you do but keep your ground, or lose somewhat, then what would become of you, if you did not strive at all, should you not goe quite downe the streame, and lose all? yes certaynely.

As a man that Rowes agaynst the streame, so long as he Rowes, he does some good, loseth some ground, and getteth some: but if he leaves Rowing,

Rowing, he goes quite downe the ſtream. And as a man may keepe the field againſt his enemy, though he doe not conquer him, yea though hee loſeth ground; yet it is one thing to keepe the field, and another thing to be beaten out, and overcome; now this continuall ſtriving makes a man to keepe the field againſt his infirmity, and not to be overcome, and therefore its worth the while to continue ſtriving.

Laſtly, I ſay, that though a man is ſure of victory, and that his cauſe is never ſo good, and that he goes on a good ground, yet God may in his wiſedome ſo diſpoſe of the matter, that hee may loſe the victory for a time; as we ſee the Iſraelites in a good cauſe were foyled twice by the Benjamites; and ſo the Diſciples of Chriſt that were ſent on his buſineſſe to fiſh, they fiſhed all night in vaine. And ſo *Moſes*, though he went on Gods errand, yet he prevailed not a good while, but the people were oppreſſed more than before, *Exod.* 5. 4. *Anſw.*

And ſo *Paul*, though he was called to goe into *Macedonia*, yet ſee in the ſtory what a many lets he had, yet afterwards he planted a Church there; ſo when wee ſtrive againſt any ſinfull luſt, our cauſe is good, and we have a certain promiſe that we ſhall overcome, even as certaine a promiſe as *Ioſhuah* had, that he ſhould drive out the *Canaanites*, and overcome them, when the Lord encouraged him, ſaying, I wil not faile thee, nor forſake thee. So ſure a promiſe have we in the firſt of *Luk.* *ver.* 74. Wee ſhall be delivered from all our ene-

mies, that so we might serve God in holines: and therfore be not discouraged though thy infirmity hang long long upon thee, but strive against it, in the end thou shalt get the victory.

Quest. 2. A second question is, whether an infirmity may hang on a man all his life, or no; for some men may say, I have have had a sinne which haunted me all my life hitherto, and may do till my dying day, for ought as I doe know, and shall I then say this is an infirmity.

Answ. In this case we must distinguish of infirmities, for infirmities are either occasionall, which are occasioned by some other accident, or habituall, which stay longer by a man, and these are either naturall to us, and so proceed either from our Parents, and so are hereditary to us, even as some diseases are; and so we are subject to the very same infirmities that our parents are: else they are such, as arise from the temper of our owne bodies.

Such as proceed from our naturall complexion, or else such as proceed from custome, which is another nature: now I say, that occasionall infirmities, such as arise from without, and such as come from Sathan, these continue but for a fit, and doe not last all a mans life, God doth usually set Sathan a limited time: He may give him liberty to tempt a man, but he sets him his bounds, thus long he must doe it, and no longer, usually I say, God doth thus; for he may suffer him to doe it longer, but seldome all a mans life. But now for our naturall hereditary infirmities, these may, and doe oftentimes continue for tearme of life: for they

they have a root in us. Now though you doe lop off the branches, yet the roote wil send forth more againe: I do not say, that they so prevaile, as that they reigne in a man; for grace will continually get ground against it: but it may remain in a man so long as hee lives, and God hath a good end in it; for he would glorifie his Son in us, not onely at our first conversion, but all our life after; hee would make us depend on Christ alwaies, as well for sanctification as for justification: he would make us see what need wee have of a daily Mediator, and therefore leaves daily infirmities in our Nature to exercise us with, and to cause us to looke up to Christ, as the Brazen Serpent was lift up among the Israelites.

Another case may be this, whether a sin against knowledge and with deliberation may be said to be a sin of infirmity, or no? *Quest.* 3.

To this I answer, that a sin committed simply with deliberation, cannot be an infirmity: that is, let a man be ever himselfe, without let or impediment, let him be his owne man, let the eye of his understanding be as when the Sun shines, and dispels the mists, so that it may see all before it; and let his will and affections walke at liberty: and in this case a good man cannot sin deliberately. See the ground of this, *Rom.* 7. 17. If I commit sinne, it is no more I, but sinne that dwelleth in me: That is, when I am my selfe, my owne man, not bound up with any lust, I thus doe not sinne, it is not I: But in this case, which is the usuall, and indeed all the case of Christians, namely, when any *Answ.*

passion, or inordinate affection, or strong distemper doth either blinde the eye of reason, or tye up his affection, so that he is not at liberty, then I may commit a sin, having long deliberated on it. There may bee such distemper of affection as may continue long, and though it do not wholly blind Reason, yet it blindes most of it. And this was the case of *David* in numbring the people, hee deliberated on it: *Ioab* tels him the truth, and reasoned the case with him, and yet hee did it: and so we know in murthering *Vriah*, it was consulted on, and a deliberate action, but there was much passion mingled with it: *David* was not himselfe, there was some strong affection that did bind and tie up the use of the regenerate part, as in drunkennesse, that accesse bindes up for a time the use of reason, so that he could not walke in the liberty of his spirit, and therefore it was his infirmity: We may see, that passion overcame *David* for the time, by his comming out of these sinnes: For when after he came to himselfe, and saw the greatnesse of it, as usually when a sinne is committed, (and not before) then we see the grievousnesse of it; then *David* confessed he he had sinned and done very foolishly.

So a Christian may fall into a course of worldly mindednesse, or the like, and this lust may hang upon a man, and yet be a sinne of infirmity: first, when a man is himselfe, hee sees it, and repents it.

Answ. 2. Secondly, I answer, that in their deliberation, which is mingled with passion, there is a double errour;

errour; namely, when a man erres either about the ultimate or last end, or when he erres onely in the meanes. Now a regenerate man hath set up God for his last end, whom he must never forsake, nor part with for all the world, but in some particular thing he may erre; As when he thinkes he may doe such a thing, and yet keepe his God still; or else he may get pardon for sinne quickly, or else minceth his sinnes by distinctions, &c. and so may commit a sinne deliberately: For this is a true rule, that any sin is a sinne of infirmity, so long as we doe erre about the last end, though in some particular we are out, concerning the meanes and way to it.

But now an unregenerate man, he deliberates after this manner; I would have God for my God, I would not bee without God in the world, but there is such a pleasure, such a profit which I must needes have, and rather then he will lose it, he will part with God, thus he makes pleasure his uttermost end. A man loves his life, & loves the use of his members, as of his hand, his arme, or his leg, &c. But he had rather lose his hand, or any of his members than his life. So a wicked man covets his pleasure more than his life, he cannot live if he have it not; and God he esteemes but as one of his members, which he would not willingly want: But a Christian hath God for his chiefe end, and never sins with deliberation, about this end: he will not forget God upon any tearms, but may erre in the way, thinking he may fulfill such a lust, and keepe God too.

Quest. 4. Another question is, whether a regenerate man may not fall into some presumptuous sins, and so commit a sinne that is not of infirmity.

Answ. 1 For answer to this, we must know, that a presumptuous sinne is of two sorts: First, a sin that is simply presumptuous, when wee know such a thing to be sinfull, and yet presuming on Gods mercy, we will doe it; I say thus a godly man cannot sinne presumptuously.

2 But there is a sin that is comparatively presumptuous; to wit, in comparison of our other sinnes, which wee commit with more reluctancy, with more tenderness of conscience: but some others we commit more against knowledge, and are more our selves when we doe them; these are comparatively presumptuous sinnes, and a godly man may sometime commit them: As wee see, it was *Davids* case in the matter of *Uriah*, when hee plotted his death.

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The end of the first SERMON.

The

The second Sermon:

BY

JOHN PRESTON Dr. of Divinity.

Matthew 12. Vers. 18. 19. 20.

18. *Behold my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved, in whom my soule is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgement to the Gentiles.*

19. *He shall not strive, nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voyce in the streetes.*

20. *A bruised Reed shall he not break, and smoaking flaxe shall he not quench, till he send forth judgement unto Victory.*

I Have made choyce of these Words for the Affinity they have with that Text, whereof wee have so lately spoken in this place, that out of this Text wee might prosecute the point already entred upon, by occasion of the prayer of that good King in the former Text: for Christ is here brought in shewing judgement

to

to the Gentiles, and doing it in a meek and tender manner, *Verse* 3. In which manner is here illustrated by the consideration of the persons to whom this judgement was declared or shewed, who are here expressed under the similitudes of a bruised Reed, and smoaking flaxe.

A Reed, the weakest plant, that is, not a strong Tree; yet this a broken one, none of the strongest: So Flaxe, that takes the fire a great deale sooner than a Reed will, especially if it be drye, and have hung neere the fire, but most of all, if it be already smoaking, the least sparke will do that; yet Christ will not quench that little spark.

Then he shewes the issue of his Teaching, *till he bring forth judgment into victory*: that is, untill that little sparke have got the mastery, or that he may, &c. and so it is a reason of his tender dealing: because otherwise, if roughly dealt withall, it never would prevaile: as a little coale, if it be hard blowne, is soone extinguished, but if nourished, and gently dealt with, increaseth to a mighty flame: So the least grace, though as weake as a bruised, crushed Reed, or as small as a sparke of fire, that only makes the flax to smoak, yet if cherished by Christ, it will increase, and come at last to victory: so that in these Verses yee have foure things.

First, the Office of our Saviour Iesus Christ, which is, to Teach men judgement.

Secondly, the manner how he doth it: namely, with Tendernesse and Meeknesse.

Thirdly, the persons: namely, such as are very weake

weake and feeble in grace and holineſſe of life.

Fourthly, the iſſue, namely, that *He will bring forth judgement into victory*. For the firſt and ſecond of theſe.

The office (I ſay) of Chriſt, is to teach men judgement, and this he doth with much tenderneſſe, compaſſion, and gentleneſſe: for the former part, that Chriſts office is to ſhew men judgment. *Doct.* 1.

Firſt, to teach men the juſt and righteous waies of God; ſo the word is taken in the old Teſtament, to enlighten men to judge of the wayes of God. There be two ends why Chriſt came; firſt, to juſtifie, and ſecondly to ſanctifie us, to gives us forgivenes of ſins, 3. *Act.* laſt. 5. *Act.* 31. therefore Chriſt is often compared to a ſhepheard, in the 10 of St. *John*, (and many other places) that feedes his flock, and he is alſo called, *Ioh.* 1. 9. the true light which lightneth the world, and every man that commeth into the world: (that is) if Chriſt had not come into the world, there would not have bin one ſpark of Gods Image left in man, neither *Adam* nor his poſterity ſhould have knowne any thing, but a cloud of darkneſſe ſhould have ſeized on mens minds. But now by Chriſts comming every one, even the wicked have this benefit, that they have ſeene common light: Chriſt lightens every one that commeth into the world, in ſome ſort teacheth them ſo much as ſhall make them inexcuſable. 1

It is his office to teach men, and he doth it in the next place with much gentleneſſe and tenderneſſe: that we will eaſily grant, if wee conſider 2

who it is that teacheth, and who we are that are that are taught, a rude people, so hard to conceive, so ready to forget, therefore we had needs have much gentlenesse. We say when one quickly conceives a thing, and then goes to teach it to another that cannot apprehend it, it will weary him, if he be not very meeke. An angry man when he findes any impediment, hee flyes on the face it presently, and a proud man he will not beare so much, nor waite so long. But now Christ is meek, and thinkes not much to waite from day to day, to drop in here a line, and there a line, here a little, and there a little: he teacheth with much meekenesse; the reason is in the verse before; Christ deales with us according to his nature and disposition. Now as it is said before, he shall not strive nor cry; when the Pharisees would have killed him, rather than he would strive with them, hee departed, yeelding to them, went his waies from them. And againe it is said, neither shall his voyce be heard in the streetes, alluding to an action of his, when he had wrought a great worke, he bad them not utter the matter: hee came not with pompe, and majesty as great men, that cannot come into a place, but the towne must ring of them; he deters no man by his greatnesse, from comming unto him, but was of an humble and meek disposition. And according as his nature was, so he dealt with us, teaching us with much tendernes, and meeknes: then there is no reason, why we should be discouraged for any of our infirmities, for Christ will beare with them. If he were

were not God, and man; that is, if he were not patient in an infinite manner, hee could not beare with us: but he is infinitely patient, therefore be not discouraged: in *Ezek.* 34.16. hee compares himselfe to a shepheard, and (saith he) I will seeke that which was lost, and bring againe that which was driven away, and will binde up that which was broken, and wil strengthen the weake: where we see there be foure causes of weaknesse. *Causes* 4.

First, men are apt to straggle out of the way, through vanity and weaknesse of their owne spirits. Now when a man doth so weaken and lose himselfe through his own folly, then Christ seeks him, and will not suffer him to be utterly lost. 1

David wandred as well as *Saul*, but God sought *David* againe, and would not lose him: therefore we see that *David* delights to use this Metaphor in *Psal.* 119.176.

Againe, a temptation may come on a man which is too strong for him, and drive him out of the way, as sheepe when theeves come, are driven out of the fold, whither else they would not have gone: these Christ promiseth to bring backe againe: as *David* recovered the sheepe out of the paw of the Lion and Beare, so Christ will recover his children that were carried away with such strong temptations.

Againe, suppose there be some wound made in the soule by some actuall sinne, if there bee some breach made into the conscience, Christ promiseth in the next place to make up this breach, that he will binde up that which was broken: a man

may complaine that he is weake, and ready to ſtraggle as before: therefore Chriſt promiſeth to ſtrengthen that which is weake, that is, hee will lead them on to a greater meaſure of ſtrength daily, whereby they ſhall be able to get victory over ſuch infirmities: *Eſa.* 40. 11. He ſhall feede his flock like a ſhepheard, he ſhall gather the Lambes with his arme, and ſhall carry them in his boſome, and ſhall guide them with young: Here we ſee, that in the fold of Chriſt there is this difference of ſheep.

Some are ſtrong that can goe apace; ſome are weaker, that cannot keepe pace with the other, and they are compared to the Ewes with young, that can goe but a ſlow pace: Some are ſo weake, that they muſt be carried, elſe they cannot goe. Now thoſe that are ſo weake, that they cannot comprehend Chriſt, he is ready to comprehend them: when men are weake, and have not that uſe of their faith which others have, to lay hold on Chriſt; Chriſt will take hold on them, and carry them in his boſome, and thoſe that are weake, and cannot keepe pace with others, he will guide them, and drive them on, according to their pace, and he will drive on the ſtrong according to their ſtrength; and though he beare with the weake, he expects more from the ſtrong: See how *Iacob* ordered his flocke in that manner that he would not out-drive them: and ſhall not God doe ſo alſo, who hath taught the Husbandman this diſcretion, *Eſa.* 28. uſe it himſelfe? ſurely he will: in the 1 of S. *Iam. ver.* 5. If any man lack wiſdome, let

let him aske it of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth none, and it shall be given unto him: That is, you shall finde this difference betweene God and man.

If one be foolish, and goes to man, man is ready to despise him, and laugh at him: but if he aske wisedome at Gods hands, he gives it to him liberally, and twits him not with his folly, upbraides him not with his weakneſſe: look how a tender mother deales with her child, the more its weakneſſe is, the more tender she is of it; so doth Christ guide us according to our weakneſſe, and tender us the more, because we are meeke and humble: and therefore wee have no cause to bee discouraged, for that weakneſſe which we finde in our selves. We are indeed exceeding backward to beleeve this, and therefore see what's added: *Ezek.* 34.16. He saith he will feed them with judgment: That is, with wisedome and discretion: for he is wise, and knowes how to feede them, according to their weake capacities, and so his Wisedome may bee a ground that hee will tender us.

Again, his power may shew that he wil do this with us, because hee is able to make crooked things straight: If a man meet with a crooked piece of wood, which he would streighten for his use, and cannot, he throwes it away, because he cannot make it straight. Men if they are to deale with a Scholler that is hard to learne, they give give him over, because he is uncapable; they cannot make him conceive instructions. But Christ is

able to make crooked waies ſtraight, to quicken thoſe that are dul, to put new natures into us; and therefore he will not deale ſo harſhly with us.

Againe, if there he any grace in us, it is his owne worke, and therefore it is for his credit to perfect it. 1 *Theſ.* 5. 24. *Phil.* 1. 6. he ſhould not be faithfull elſe, if he ſhould not doe it; but he will doe it as a workman loves his owne workes, and will not leave them unperfect, ſo neither will Chriſt. Againe, it is his Fathers will, that thoſe who are weake ſhould be cheriſhed, his delight is ſtill in leading them from one degree of ſtrength to another; for his power is more ſeene in them, and he hath more thankes from them, as hee had from *Mary Magdalen.*

Objection. But ſome will ſay, oh but my heart is ſo untoward, that I feare I ſhall never overcome?

Anſw. Conſider well that place, the 42. of *Eſa.* 5, 6. *verſ.* Thus ſaith the Lord, Hee created the heavens, and ſtretched them out; he that ſpread forth the earth, and that which commeth out of it; he that giveth breath to the people upon it, and ſpirit to them that walke therein: I the Lord have called thee, &c. Conſider who it is that created the heavens, the earth, and the buds thereof; that gives breath, &c. is it not God? now then ſuppoſe he findeth nothing in the nature of man, but an emptineſſe of grace and holineſſe; is it not he that made the heavens when there was none before? and then is not he able to create grace in a mans heart?

Againe, looke on the earth in the winter, it is very

very hard, a man would thinke it should never bring forth flowers, yet in the spring it puts forth many kinde of fruits and flowers: so though thy heart be as hearbes in winter, yet God is able to make grace sprout forth there, as flowers in the spring; besides it is he that giveth breath to the people; that is, if you looke upon all the creatures in the world, yet none was able to put life in them, but God. So though your soules be like unto a clod of earth, hee is able to put life in them, the breath of life, as he did at the first; hee is able to enlighten and enlarge them further, and therefore bee not discouraged for thy weaknesse.

Is it thus? that Christ teacheth in judgement, and that with much compassion and tendernesse? then this should encourage men to come unto Christ, to learne of him, to take his yoke on them: this use we finde to be made of this Doctrine in the 11 of St. *Mat.* 28, 29, and 30 Verses, Come unto mee all yee that are weary and heavy laden, and I will ease you: take my yoke on you, and learne of me, and you shall finde rest to your soules: for my yoke is easie, and my burthen is light: that is, let a man looke upon Christ and his wayes, and usually they are discouraged with the strictnesse of Religion, they thinke they shall be e too straight laced, and bound with fetters, that are too straight for them. Now (saith Christ) feare not, for I am meeke and lowly, and such shal you find my dealings to be towards you. *Use* 1.

There be two things in the Text to move us to come

come in to Christ, and to be subject to his yoke.

1 First, the nature of the thing it selfe, it is an easie yoke: Before you come to me, you are like men in prison; but when you come to me, I loosen you, and set you at liberty: before you were as in darkenesse, but when you come to me, I enlighten you: before you were as men in sickenesse, but when you come to me, I strengthen and heale you.

2 A second thing, is from the person you have to deale with, that is, Christ: Come unto me, for I am exceeding gentle, and meeke, and such shall you finde me: *Iohn Baptist* and *Moses* came roughly, but Christ is come in tendernesse; if you be subject to infirmities, he is ready to passe them by; if you be overcome with them he is ready to recover you: and therefore now come in to Christ, submit your selves to his yoke, to his teaching and discipline, to his rule and government which is so easie. But if you will not, hee will rule you with a rod of Iron, and breake you in pieces like a Potters Vessell; if you stand out with him, then none is so rough as hee, and therefore observe him.

If a King should say at his Coronation, he would open all the prison doores, would not offenders take that opportunity? or if a Creditor should say to his debtors, come to me at such a time, and I will forgive you and your debts, and give you in your bonds: would the debtor over-slip that time?

So

So let us, when Christ offers himselfe to touch us with such tendernes, goe to him, take that time especiall; considering that these are such times as are in Gods owne power; those things that are in our owne power, we may doe what wee will with, and take our owne time: but these times are not in our hands, but in Gods, and therefore take heede of overslipping that time, when Christ carries himselfe as a Nurse unto us: there is a time for every purpose, and that lasts but for a season, *Eccles.* 3. 11, 12. There is a certaine season which God hath appoynted for every purpose, there is a time when the businesse may be well done, and if that be let slippe, it will not succeede, but he will be snared in an evill time, because he knoweth not the good time.

Therefore when it is past, his misery is great. So chiefly there is a time of receiving grace, but this time a man knowes not, yet he is undone if he passe it: therefore take heede of overslipping any offer of grace: procrastination in all things is dangerous, but here especially. Now that which deceives us, is the deferring: but we must not deferre one day, and say, then we shall doe it another; no, for then we shall let the time be past: as in a Chariot, the Wheeles runne neare one another, but they never overtake one another. And as in a Clock the Minutes are but little distant one from another, yet none of them are together: So the Divell by his cunning thinkes to make you doe it now, and by and by,

[illegible] be [illegible] you passe your hour, therefore take heede of deferring, and come in, while Christ doth expresse himselfe thus unto you in these tearmes, whiles he deales thus tenderly and gently with you. It is a very dangerous thing to lose the opportunity of receiving Christ when he offers himselfe, when he deales gently, which we gather from that place; thus, if there be a time for every purpose, then certainely there is a time for the greatest business that a man hath to doe on the earth, that is, to come in to Christ, and receive him, and if the misery of man be great upon him, if he let slip other seasons, much more if he neglect this; but now there is a time for every purpose, as these places testifie. And to instance in some few, *Gehezi* tooke a gift of *Naaman*, 2 *King.* 5. saith *Elisha* to him, Is this a time to take gifts? there was a time when thou mightest have done it, at another time, of another person thou mightest, but this was not a time: for *Naaman* was a stranger, and did not know the customes; and *Elisha* would give him his health freely, and therefore it was not the time; and therefore wee see the misery was great, the leprosie clave to him and his posterity, because he knew not the time; so *Saul* because he sacrificed before *Samuel* came, the thing he did was good, but he tooke not the right time, he was too hasty, he knew not his time, and so his misery was great upon him; God took the Kingdome from him, and gave it to his neighbour, 1. *Sam.* 13. 13, 14. So *Iacob* when he sought the blessing, he thought he did a good thing,

thing, but he did not stay the time, so the misery was great upon him. See what a long peregrination, what a hard service he did undergo under his uncle *Laban*, and all because he knew not the right time. So the *Israelites* when they sought a King, if they had staied their due time, God would in his due time have revealed unto them, that *David* should be their King, for he had so appointed it; and therefore because they missed of the time, their misery was great on them; so likewise for other purposes, so for this, there is a time for a man to come in, and take the offer that Christ makes, a time when he is kinde and gentle, and ready to receive us; if we know not this time, and so over-slip it, our misery will bee great upon us. Now then it is very requisite to know and find out this time; because if we choose Gods time, God will joyne with us in the worke, and so it will be done with ease, *Eccles.* 3. 9, 10. A time to love, &c. what profit hath he that worketh, in that wherein he laboureth? I have seene the travell which God hath given to the sonnes of men, to be exercised in it: (that is) men take much travell and paines to bring their purposes and ends to passe; when they doe not take Gods time, and what profit have they by it?

Now if you will open when Christ knocks at the doore, harken to the motions of the spirit, and blow them, and nourish them, and it will bee done with much ease; but if you misse this time, your misery is great; you may desire, and cry, and pray, and never the better; *Eccles.* 9. 12. For a

man also knoweth not his time, as the fish is, that is taken in the evill net, and as the birds that are caught in a snare, so are the sonnes of men snared in an evill time, when it falleth suddenly upon them: There is a double time, as we may gather out of these words, a good and acceptable time, so called, because God is then ready to accept and receive us, if we [illegible] in that time; and if we doe not make use and embrace that good and acceptable time, then the evill time shall fall upon us, we shall be caught in an evill net and snare: there may be a good net come on us, as affliction, sicknesse, and the like may come upon us, so as to doe us good, as we catch at some things to preserve them alive for a better condition than they were in: but now if wee overslip the good time, than the evill net shall fall upon us, sicknes, death, and destruction shall come on us suddenly as a snare: that we may see the ground of this, see what Christ saies, *Luk.* 19.42,43. If thou hadst knowne, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace, but now they are hidden from thine eyes: He speakes it to the *Iewes*, who yet enjoyed the ministry of Christ, and he tels them that the time of their visitation was past.

So that a man may have the liberty to live under the Ministry, long after that God hath rejected him: Christ came then and visited the *Iewes*, and all profited nothing: then the were like the Figtree that Christ cursed, after their day was passed: and this day may be long before a mans death, he may

may live long rejected: and therefore let us take heed we doe not ſtand out our time. In outward things we are wont to anticipate and prevent time: ſo *Iacob* got the bleſſing before the time: and the *Iſraelites* fought for a King before the time: and ſo men would be haſtily rich, and ſo for pleaſures; if we ſhould ſtay Gods time, to take it after labour, we ſhould doe well, but we prevent our time here; but in ſpirituall things we are too ſlow, let ſlip our time, to come after: But this is dangerous, take heede of it: It's a good note which the Stoicks have; ſome things are in our owne power, and in them wee may uſe our owne liberty: but other things are in the power of others, and then we muſt take the opportunity while it is offered: we muſt Saile when the Winde blowes. Now of this latter kinde are ſpirituall things, and therefore we muſt take the time that's offered: Indeed if the time were in our owne power, or if we knew the time when we might delay. *Act.* 1. 11. It is not for us to know the times which the Father hath kept for his owne power, and no man knoweth what ſhall be, neither can any tell it him, and therefore take heede of letting ſlippe the time: Sathan deceives us in this, juſt as the Lapwing doth, when a man is neare her neſt, ſhe flieth a little before a man, and then lighteth, and flyeth a little further, till he hath led us quite out of the way.

So Sathan makes us deferre a little longer, and a little longer, till our time be paſt, and there-

therefore deferre no longer, but come in unto Christ whiles he offers himselfe in a loving and tender manner: And so much for the office of Christ, which is to teach, and his manner of teaching, with much meeknesse and gentlenesse.

Now followes the third thing to be considered, and that is the persons that Christ hath to deale with, such as are very meeke, compared here to a bruised Reed, and smoaking Flaxe. A Reed is of it selfe very weake, and shaken with every wind, and not onely so, but broken with the least force. So a Christian may be subject to much unevennesse and inconstancy in his wayes, shaken with every temptation; but when this shall be a broken reed, this is a further degree of weaknesse: and so for smoaking flaxe, it must be an exceeding little sparke which will not cause flaxe to smoake, and yet with such weake ones hath Christ to deale: He will not breake the bruised Reede, nor quench the smoaking flaxe.

Now from the persons that Christ teacheth, that is, weake ones, observe this poynt:

That there may be exceeding great weaknesse in true Christians; we see in the Text they are compared to the weakest things, a bruised Reed, and smoaking Flaxe: the first reason of it is this.

Reas. 1. Because it pleaseth Christ in working grace, to doe it by degrees; he might have perfected the worke of grace altogether, as he did in the work of

not at once in an instant, but he deales with us according to the course of generation; as a plant is first sowne, then wrought by degrees: So we in the beginning of grace are exceeding small; he Heales us as he did the blinde man, not altogether, but by little and by little.

First, we see more darkly and confusedly, and then more cleanely; and he Heales our lamenesse, not altogether by setting us on our feete at the first, but he gives us strength by degrees: first to go on crouches, as it were, or to creepe, or step forward, and afterwards to goe more strongly; and hence it is, that there are many weake, because grace is but weakly wrought in them. Now the reason why Christ doth thus lead us on by degrees, is first to humble us, and to let us see that the worke is not of ourselves, it is God that worketh in us according to his good pleasure, for when we are brought on by degrees thus, it makes it evident unto us, that we receive strength from another. Secondly, He doth it for his owne glory, that we might know the righteousnesse of Christ: in the 8 of *Deut.* 2. 17. there is set downe these two ends, why the Lord led them through the wildernesse, and not the neareſt way.

First, Gods end in it was to humble them.

Secondly, to let them know, that he did it for his owne sake: So he doth here to humble them, and for his owne glory; God doth not perfect grace at the first, but by degrees, and likewise that they may know his power, that it is his strength

in

in which they walke, that if a Christian should be left to himselfe, he would quickly find that it is Christs power that hee must walke in, that must go along with him to guide him, and to deliver him from his enemies.

Use. Now for the use of this, it may serve to comfort weake Christians: what though thou art not at that growth as other Christians are? yet be of good comfort; a Reed hath life in it, aswell as the strongest Oke: what though thou canst not see the flame of an Holy Conversation, but only the fume: yet you may know there is fire: Men that are in the Covenant, are like men that are gone in at a doore, or into a Church, or the like: some are further in than others, but yet all are in: So though the weake be not so forward as another, yet he may be in, though not so farre in: for a bud drawes sap from the roote, aswell as the fruite: why so thou maist be a bud, and have grace in some Measure, though not in so great a Measure: yet thou maist be a true Christian, though a weake Christian.

Objection. But you will say, that it is a hard thing to be perswaded, that God will accept of such a weakling as I am.

Answ. Therfore consider the nature of Christ, for we are deceived in that, as in other things: in 2. of *Heb. vers.* 17, *We see that it behoved Christ in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that hee might be a mercifull high Priest, &c.* Christ is our High-priest: now there are three Offices of our High-priest:

First,

First, He was to receive every Sacrifice.
Secondly, to offer Sacrifice daily.
Thirdly, to lay the Wood together, and preserve the fire.

Three offices of Christ.

Now then it belongs to Christ, to receive every sinner that comes to him, as it did to *Aaron*, to receive the Sacrifice: and if Christ should not do all that belongs to his Office, he should be an unfaithfull High-priest: but hee is called a faithfull High-priest. If then a sinner come to Christ, and saith, Lord I know that God is a consuming fire, and I dare not come to him in my selfe, but in the Merit of that Sacrifice which thou offred'st, Christ cannot reject him: but sayes hee to him, *Come unto me, and I will receive you:* if they doe but come, He cannot but receive them, else hee should be unfaithfull in his Office, and in his promise: but He is faithfull in both, and not only so, but He is a Mercifull High-priest, and so wil pity them that come unto Him, though you have many Infirmities & Imperfection: why, it is Christs Office to renew the Sacrifice daily: He offers up a daily sacrifice for us, even His owne righteousnesse: and as He doth this for Iustification, so for Sanctification also. When Sacrifice was layd on the Altar, the Priests could not bring fire from Heaven to consume it: but God sent it, and so shewed that it was accepted: We may lay the Wood together, but cannot bring fire from Heaven: But Christ is a Priest of an Higher Order than was *Aaron*: Hee will kindle this fire of Sanctification, and encrease it, and keepe it still

burning; it's his office so to doe: and therefore doubt not but Christ will receive you.

Objection. Oh, but this were some comfort, if I had assurance that I had but one sparke of true grace in me: therefore how shall I know that?

Answ. I answer, there be five signes laid downe in the Text, whereby a man may come to know this.

5. Signes.

1 First, in these words, *He will bring forth judgement into victory*: That is the first thing that Christ doth, even to set up a right judgement in thee: When the Apostle praies for the *Philippians*, he praies, That they may abound in knowledge and judgement.

2 Secondly, there is life in a bruised Reed, as in the strongest Oke.

3 Thirdly, there is fire, though never so small, as in the strongest Oke.

4 Fourthly, there is a Combate.

5 Fiftly, there is a victory.

1 Now for the first of these, consider whether Christ hath set up his judgement in thee: when the Apostle praies that the *Philippians* may abound in knowledge, and all judgement: That is, that they may discerne of things that differ, and he takes it for granted that it was right, else he would not pray for the encrease of it.

So that when a man can discerne of things that differ, when he can put a difference between the waies of God and sin, betweene spirituall priviledges, and outward vanities, betweene truth and

and falſhood: Then there is a light come into a Man, and this makes them pure and blameleſſe, fils them with the fruits of righteouſneſſe: now then if thou haſt this in any degree, thou haſt the ſpirit of Chriſt: as it was in *Chriſt, Eſay* 11. 2. 3. *He had the ſpirit of wiſedome and underſtanding, the ſpirit of might the ſpirit of Knowledge, and of the feare of the Lord.* So is it in all his Members, they have the ſame ſpirit, and doe not judge according to the ſight of the Eye, or the Hearing of the Eare, but judge righteouſly: for there is a Two-fold judgment: firſt, when our Eye or Eare judge, and wee judge according to that; when we ſend out our ſpirits, and heare what they report, and this is ready to bring in a falſe Report, to ſay that ſinne is ſweet and pleaſant, and it will repreſent grace as vile, becauſe it judgeth according to outward appearance: and the out-ſide of Chriſtianity is baſe, in regard of miſ-reports, that are brought up of it: as the ten Meſſengers brought an evill Report upon the land of *Canaan*; and in regard of the out-ſide of it in thoſe that profeſſe it, who are many times poore and contemptible Men, and in regard of the Infirmities and failings of the Saints. Now if a Man judge by the Eye, that ſees nothing but the out-ſide, he will eſteeme of Religion as baſe. But it is otherwiſe when a Man hath the ſpirit of judgment, he will looke further into Things, he pries into the inſide, and then he wil not judge of the wayes of God, and of ſinne, as the World doth: but will ſee a baſeneſſe in ſinne, and an ex-

cellency in religion, because hee is enabled to judge aright.

For Christ, as he makes his princes and Priests, so he makes them Prophets likewise, to judge and discerne of things aright, and this he doth by opening the eyes, *Acts* 26. 18. that is, good things in themselves are very excellent, and desirable, but we see them not till our eyes are opened, there is a vaile drawne over our eyes till Christ removes it, and opens them.

Quest. What is that?

Answ. Why, Christ he elevates and raiseth up that light which we have unto an higher degree, and that is by putting a new light into their soules, *John* 1. 9. that is, the true light, which lightneth every one that commeth into the world.

Before the Creation was compleat, there was some light; the first day after the Sunne was created, and after the fall he enlightned every on that came into the World; (that is) all men have some light or other by Jesus Christ; before there was no sparke of light in us, but all that wee have is by Christ: that glimmering light which is in Naturall men, is but a sparke of the new Image, which Christ hath put on us: But in this, Christ raiseth up the light higher and higher; and when this new light is put in us: then a mans Eyes are said to be opened, when he can see round about him, and discerne that excellency in grace, and that baseneſſe

baſeneſſe in ſinne which were in them before, but they could not ſee it, as the Chariots and Horſe-men were with *Gehezi*, but his eyes were not opened to ſee them: And ſo the Well was nere *Hagar*, but ſhe ſaw it not till God had opened her eyes, and ſhewed it unto her.

So death and deſtruction may be very neere an unregenerate man, and hee not ſee it, till God opens his Eyes: ſo alſo a Chriſtian may have ground of comfort, and hee not know it, till God ſheweth it unto him: Now where a mans Eyes are opened, that hee can ſee thus round about him; then hath CHRIST ſet up his Judgement in a man.

But here now all the buſineſſe will be to diſcern betweene the common judgement of a man, and this right judgement which Chriſt ſets up in him, which difference is ſeene by theſe particulars.

First, they differ in the Authors of them: another mans judgement is borne and bred within him; but this comes from above from God: it is a new judgement, yea, a renewed judgement. *Epheſ.* 4.23. Be yee renewed in your ſpirits and minds: When thou haſt ſuch a judgement of ſin and godlineſſe, which thou hadſt not before; this is a new judgement. 1

Secondly, they differ in regard of the ſubject: this new light is alwaies in a pure heart; the other not: ſo long as the heart is overwhel- 2

med with Lusts, so long the Eye of the Soule is dim, as in a Mist, that we cannot see before us: but Christ takes away this Mist: *Titus* 2. 11. 12. 13, 14. *When the grace of God hath appeared, &c.* then we see clearely: Whereas the unregenerate Man never judgeth aright of any Holy way; because his Heart is full of lusts, which are as Mists, that they cannot see.

3 Thirdly, they differ in the Measure. Common light will perswade you of common Truth, or of Truths in generall, that such and such Things are commendable: but if you come to a particular action, and practise That, you must do This, and This, here it fayles him: but this right judgment helpes a Man to do particular actions, it enlightens him in every particular, takes away all objections, and guides you in the right way: 2. *Tim.* 2. 7. *Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things:* (That is) I have told Thee these Things in generall, but when you come to particular, the Lord must direct you.

4 Fourthly, They differ in the growth: This right judgment growes more and more, it is as the light that shines clearer and clearer, till it be perfect day. *Esay* 42. 3. 4. *He shall bring forth judgment unto truth:* when this judgement is put into a Man, every Thing addes something to it: A good Heart makes use of every Thing, but another Man that hath but a common light, doth not grow, but is apt to be offended: and at length that light that he hath, turnes into injudiciousnesse of Mind, you shall find it decrease more and

and more. 2. *Tim.* 3. 13. *Evill men waxe worse and worse:* for that light of theirs is but like a flower, which, when it is at the best, fades and decayes: and the reason of it is, because God giveth a Man leave to use that common wisedome that he hath for a time: but when they do not improove that knowledge that they have, then God takes it away from them, and turnes it into foolishnesse, as we may see, *Rom.* 1. 25. *Because they changed the truth of God into a lye, therefore they were given up to vile affections.* 1. *Cor.* 1. 19. *God will destroy the wisedome of the wise, and bring to nought the understanding of the prudent.*

Fiftly, they differ in the effects which they produce; for first, this right judgement brings forth poverty of spirit, when as before a Man thought he had some good things in him, now he sees he is nothing. Saving wisedome makes him see himselfe empty of all that was good, makes him see that before he knew nothing, as he ought to know; but now common judgment breeds pride, it puffes a Man up. 1. *Cor.* 8. 1. 2. and makes him preferre himselfe before his brethren. 5

Secondly, this right judgement, it causeth a Man to know every thing, as they ought to know it, when he knowes a right use of it. As for example, a Man that knowes his ground which he owes, when he knowes what grayne it will best beare, what Tillage and Manure is best for it: Then a man knowes his Toole as hee ought, when he knows how to use it as hee ought. 2

So a Man that knowes sinne as he ought, when he

he looks upon it so, as to lose it, and loath it, then knowes he the promises as he ought, when he makes that use of them, as he should make; when as other men mind them no more than their old shooes; and then we know forgiveneſſe of sinnes as we ought, when we thinke it the moſt precious thing in the world: and so if wee knew earthly vanities as we ought, we should weane our selves from them, yea, from all worldly things: as the lusts of the flesh, and pleasure, the lust of the eye, and riches, honour, and pride of life, or any other excellency in the world, be it what it can be, we will not then endure it.

Now when a mans eyes are opened, and he is savingly enlightned, and knowes these things as he ought, then he lookes on carnall pleasures, and sees they will bring bitterneſſe in the end: when he lookes on riches, he sees that to be true which is said of them: Why wilt thou set thy heart upon them, which are as nothing? he sees they are uncertaine, insufficient, and not able to satisfie his soule: And for the pride of life, or any excellency which before he greatly prized, now he accounts it vile and contemptible, this the spirit of right judgement enables a man to doe.

3 Thirdly, the singleneſſe of the eye is another effect of this, it teacheth a man to looke on things with a single eye: *Mat.* 6. 22, 23. There is mention made of a single eye, and of an evill eye: if a man hath a single eye, he will not looke on God and on the world, but on God alone, cleave to him, and

and serve him alone; the other is called a wicked eye, because there be many lusts on which it lookes. But this right judgement makes us looke on God singly, abstracted from all other things.

A fourth effect which this right judgement pronounceth, is, Conversion of the whole man unto God: If thy eye be single, thy whole body is full of light, (that is) shall be set straight; and when this is not done, it hinders our conversion unto God, as we may see in the 13. of *Mat.* 15. Verse. Wee cannot loooke on other things, and turne our eyes upon God at the same time. 4

Fiftly, this right Judgement it sets up, and makes a man willing to be guided by the word of God, by the Ministers, or any servant of God; a Child may lead him, the weakest Christian may lead him, if they bring spirituall reason, as natural men are led by reason, so these by the Word of God. 5

Sixtly, it makes a man able to practise that he knowes, whereas another man knowes much, practiseth little; but this judgement brings forth practice, this knowledge will lead us into action; and so much for the first signe whereby we may know whether Christ hath wrought any sparke of grace in us, namely, if he hath set up his judgement in our hearts. 6

Now for the second, this is such a Judgement as begets life: a Reed hath life as well as an Oke: now if you would know if this life be right, or 2

no, you shall know it by the heare, there is fire: so if we would know if this bee right, see it by the combate; if you would know if that bee right, try it by the victory: well then, now we have to speake of the second signe: Consider though you be weake, whether you are not as a bruised Reede, yea, or no, which hath some life, some strength in it. *A bruised Reed will he not breake*, here we will consider three things.

1 First, that there must be some strength and life in the weakest.

2 Secondly, this strength is subject unto bruisings, *A bruised Reede &c.*

3 Thirdly, that Christ will heale all these bruises; he will not breake the bruised Reed, but will bring forth judgement into victory.

For the first of these, there must bee a Reede which hath some life in it: Now life is such a faculty, whereby creatures moove themselves in their owne places, so say the Philosophers: other things that have not life may moove themselves when they are out of their owne places: as a stone, when it is out of its owne place, mooves downewards; and fire here below, being out of its place moves upwards; but nothing can move it selfe in its place, but that which hath life in it. To apply this to our purpose, whosoever moves himselfe in the wayes of God, hath life in him: There bee many things may move us towards God, as good education, a powerfull ministry, good company, and the like; as *Ioash* and *Amaziah*

with were good, while their good friends lived; but all this doth not argue life in us, because they are but extrinsecall causes; as a hand may make a stone move upwards, the stone hath not life therefore; but when a man is so farre enlightned, so fashioned and formed by Jesus Christ, that he judgeth aright of the waies of God, and being thus formed, he moves himselfe to doe good, then he is said to be alive, when Christ shall set up Judgement in the heart of men, to see the evill of the waies of sin, and the good that is in the waies of God, even then he moves towards those waies naturally and willingly, such a one hath life in him: Let some consider this, that live in the Church under good Tutors or Masters, or Parents, that are carried on in a crowd of good company; they may do much, and yet have no life, because it may proceede from an outward cause; not from an inward perswasion of the Heart, of the goodnesse of the wayes wherein they walke.

There is a two-fold perswasion: one is, that the wayes of God are good; a bare perswasion onely, and yet this stirres not men up to walke in these wayes; but it lyes dead in the Heart. 1

But there is another perswasion which is ingrafted in the Heart, that moves a man to new obedience: 1. *Iam.* 21. 22. So we shall finde there a double expression of light: one, which barely shewes men all evill and good: But there is another light with life, *Ioh.* 8. 12. *He that followeth* 2

we shall have the light of life: It is an *Hebraisme*, He shall have the light of life, that is, the lively light: *Eph.* 5.14. Awake from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

1. The first difference betweene them, is, the one reveales the waies of God, but so, that the affections are not moved, the hands are not set on worke.

2. But the other is, when that the waies of God are so revealed, that we see an amability, an excellency in them; and so, that we lift up our hearts unto the waies of the Lord, as before we did unto vanity; (that is) wee desire earnestly to walke in them.

Consider how you lifted up your hearts to riches, pleasures, and other earthly vanities; if now you so lift up your hearts to walke in his wayes, then here is that inward perswasion, that lively light wrought in you, that life whereof we speak: This life is nothing else, but that which the Scripture calleth faith.

Now there is a dead faith spoken of, and how shall we know it to be dead? Thus, when it stirres us not up to good workes: And how shall we know it is living? when it moves us willingly and readily to duties of obedience; Christ dwels in the heart by faith: So saith Sr. *Paul*, The life I now live, is by faith in the Son of God, *Gal.* 2.20. (that is) there are two men that looke on Christ; one looks on him, beleeves all the promises, all threatnings, all his word, opens his heart, and lets Christ come in, and rule, and doe there what he list.

Another

Another saith (if you aske him) that he beleeves all this; but we shall know it by this, because it doth not make him move forwards to new obedience: now according to our life that is in us, so is our strength; the lesse life, the lesse strength, *Revelations* 3. 8. The Church of *Philadelphia* is said to have a little strength: now if you would know whether you have true strength or no; you must distinguish betweene life and strength, to wit, the least degree of strength will first enable a man to doe all things in some measure; though not in that measure you should: it will enable you to love God, to beleeve, to pray, &c. you can doe something of every thing. *Philippians* 4. 13. I can doe all things through Christ that strengthneth mee. 1

Secondly, though it doe not reach the highest degree, yet aimes at it, and hath a desire to come to it: After hee had said, hee had not yet attained to perfection, but aimed at it, made forward toward it: hee addes, let as many as bee perfect bee thus minded: the least sparke of fire will endeavour to rise above the Aire, as well as the greatest, and where true strength is, it will endeavour to bee stronger. 2 Phil. 3. 14, 15.

Thirdly, that is not an empty levelling at it, but it growes up to it; so doth not other common strength: there is a strength in Iron to resist violent strokes, and in a Rocke to resist the force of the waves, but this is not a vitall strength, so in 3

other men there may be ſtrength of Reſolution, but it is not a ſelfe-moving ſtrength, and therefore it continues as it was, and growes not: but in vitall ſtrength, there is a period to which it growes, and never reſts til it comes up to it, as we ſee in plants and other living creatures, and men, they grow up to their full ſtrength: ſo Chriſtians have their period which they grow up to, and this period is perfect Holineſſe, which they cannot attaine too in this life: and therefore they are ſtill growing ſo long as they live. Now then ſee if you have ſuch a ſtrength: and if you can finde that you have, then there is life in you: And that is the firſt that were propounded to ſhewe, that there muſt be ſome life, ſome ſtrength.

2 The ſecond thing was, that this ſtrength is ſubject to much bruiſing: *A bruiſed Reed will hee not breake*: A weake Chriſtian, though hee have not the ſtrength of a man, yet he hath the ſtrength of a child, though not of a Tree, yet of a Plant: and ſuch ſtrength is ſubject unto bruiſings, and the leſſe ſtrength, the more ſubject it is to bruiſings, as we ſee in plants. Now bruiſings are of two ſorts, and both ariſing from ſinne.

1 The firſt ariſe from ſinne, as it is unpardoned: (that is) as you apprehend ſinne to be unpardoned, the more ready you are to be bruiſed.

2 The ſecond ſort ariſeth from ſinne, as it is unmortified; when a Man ſees ſtill that ſin growes up, which he had thought he had cut downe, hee is ready to be bruiſed: The former ſort is contrary to the grace of Juſtification, the latter to that of

of Sanctification; now Christ hath promised to heale these bruises, which is the third thing to be considered: let those therefore that are thus weake consider this promise here, that Christ will Heale all these bruisings, and so all other, the promise for this purpose that He will Heale these bruisings, which arise from our doubtings of Justification, *Esay* 61. 1. 2. 3. 4. *ver.* That is the bruising for which Christ came into the World, to preach glad tydings to the weake, and to binde up the broken Hearted, to proclaime liberty to the Captives. Therefore if a poore soule would goe to Christ, and say thus: Lord I am bound with a chaine of my sinnes, and thou camest to set such at liberty: Christ hee would doe it, for he was annoynted for that very purpose.

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And so for the bruisings that arise from sin unmortified, why Christ hath promised not to leave thee to thy selfe, nor forsake thee, but will destroy all the Workes of the Divell in Thee: Therefore goe to Christ, and put Him in minde of this promise, and say, Lord, I am one of them to whom this promise is made: I am as a bruised Reed, and as smoaking Flaxe; and Thou hast promised, not to breake a bruised Reede, nor quench the smoaking Flaxe: put Christ thus in minde of His promise, and Hee will Heare, and Helpe, and Heale thee. But now here are some cases of conscience to be resolved.

2

Cases of conscience. Quest. 1.

First, some will be ready to say, that they have none of these bruises, that they are not thus weary and heaven laden, because they cannot grieve for

for sinne so much, as for other Things.

Answ. To which I answere: There may be some violent and suddain griefe, which may exceed griefe for sinne: as *Davids* griefe for *Absolom*; but here is the difference: The griefe for sinne is constant and perpetuall, but the griefe for some losse or the like, is but for the present. Now a Spring that runnes, and is never dry, yeelds more water than a land flood, which for the present seemes greater, but is soone dried up: So griefe for sinne, is like water that runs from a Spring, which continues: and griefe for other things, is like a land-flood which lasts not long.

Agayne, they differ in regard of the tearmes of this sorrow: when a Man hath lost a friend, hee lookes on it as a totall and irrepairable losse, and so grieves the more: and so in like manner, if we should looke on the favour of God, as a thing irrevocably lost, his griefe for this would exceed the other. But because he alwayes conceives some glimpse of Gods favour in the mid'st of this Mourning, therfore this griefe seemes the lesse, though in regard of continuance it be greater.

2. *Cast.* O! but I have not attained to a just Measure of bruisednesse.

Answ. If there be such a Measure of bruisednesse in thee as brings thee Home to Christ, thou hast attained a sufficient Measure to bring thee to Heaven. But this distinction must be remembred, that there is a double bringing of a man Home unto Christ.

1 One is, when a man is brought so far towards Christ,

Christ, as to be willing to take the Crowne, and partake of the priviledges onely, but this is not sufficient; but when thy sorrow shall so bring thee Home to Christ, that thou art willing to take Christs yoake on thee, to subject thy selfe to Christ in all things: so much sorrow and bruisednesse as this, is sufficient to bring thee Home.

O, but though I am thus farre bruised, that I am willing to beare Christs yoake, and to do that He shall commaund me, yet I doe not finde that this promise is performed to me: God hides his face from me, and I cannot finde Him whom my soule loves; and that I cannot finde that my sins are pardoned: And so for bruises belonging to Sanctification; I have striven long against such a lust, and cannot see it Mortified any whit. 3. Cases.

To this I answere, that Christ in with-holding the comfort: and suffering thee to be more laded, doth ever fulfill this promise here made. *Math.* 11. 28. *Come unto me, &c.* Answ.

But the Objection might be made: Wee have come unto thee, and yet finde no rest: Christ therefore addes, *Take my yoake upon me, and learne of me, &c.* The yoake of Christ is the government of Christ, the taking of this yeake upon us, is the subjecting our selves to this government. Objection. 1.

Now the government of Christ consists in two Things. 2. Things.

First, it commaunds us to doe many Things. 1

Secondly, Hee will have us to suffer many things: and if wee take Christs yoake upon us, 2

we must doe both. Now a man is willing to doe many things that Christ commands, but stops at some things; there is some thing, some duty which he will not doe, as prayer, giving of almes, or some other. And so also for suffering, he is willing to endure some thing for Christ, but there is something againe which he cannot endure, reproches, scoffes, and the like. If therefore God hold off comfort for any long season, let a man looke well to his spirit, and see if he bee perfectly willing to take Christ yoke upon him, if hee were, the promise is certaine, and shall be made good, he shall find rest to his soule, and if he doe not, there is some fault in himselfe. In the tenth of *Iudges*, *ver.* 10. to the end of the Chap. there the people were burthened, and cryed unto the Lord, and yet found no rest: but God deferres comfort, and tells them, he would deliver them no more; then the people submitted themselves unto God, saying, *Doe with us what pleaseth thee, and put away their strange gods*, ver. 16. *and served God.* Now when the children of Israel were brought to this, to cast away the relicks of Idolatry, and to serve the Lord perfectly; then it is said: The Lords Spirit was grieved for the misery of Israel. So if a man would have peace, and have sought it long, and cannot finde it, let him see whether there be not some relicke of corruption which God would have cast out of thy heart: and when it's done, and thou art willing to serve God perfectly, then thou shalt finde rest unto thy soule. And so much for the second signe

of

of true grace wrought in a man, to wit, if there be any life and ſtrength in him, though it bee mingled with much weakneſſe.

The third we named, that where true grace was, there was heate. *Smoaking flaxe will bee not quench*: where there is ſmoake there is fire, and where fire is, there is heate, be it never ſo ſmall: and this added to the former of life: Life is nothing elſe but a ſublimary heate, and where there is life, there is heate, all life is joyned with heate: but not on the contrary where there is heate there is life, for cold things may be warmed from without by the Sunne, but where there is heat from an inward principle, there is life. The Spirit is compared to fire and heate: Quench not the Spirit: He ſhall baptize you with the Holy Ghoſt and with fire: or which is as fire. Therefore where this ſpirit is in a man, there the Holy Ghoſt hath beene. Now this heat is nothing elſe but a ſolicitous and earneſt deſire to pleaſe God in all things, to get and increaſe communion with Chriſt, and to be built up in grace. I ſay, it is firſt a ſolicitous and earneſt deſire, a deſire accompanied with carefulneſſe how he may doe to pleaſe God in all things; whereas in other men there is a luke-warmneſſe, a remiſneſſe in all things, they care not whether they doe it or no: but this is an earneſt carefull deſire, and that in the ſecond place to pleaſe God: an hypocrite may have ſtrong deſires, let him be brought to have an apprehenſion of Gods wrath, and hell-fire, and hee would have an earneſt deſire to be delivered from

3

it: But all this is not to please God, but himselfe, and not God in all this: But our desire must be to please God: *See how the affections were stirred*, and what fruits it wrought, they were moved by motives taken from God, and with desire tending to him, and so must we be.

1 Cor. 7.11.

3 Againe, this righteous fire hath in it this property, that it purifieth the Heart from drosse and filth, and it puts it selfe forth in holy actions, makes a man ready to pray, to speake profitably, and the like: as fire makes men active, and fit for action.

4 Lastly, it is alway guided by the spirit of judgment, when you mind that most, which the Scripture presseth most: where the Heart is upright a man despiseth none of the waies of God, not the meanest truth, but would know them all: but that which the Scripture most of all urgeth, that hee most earnestly presseth after, and labours to bring his heart unto them; as the Scripture is most love, and the like, so he taketh most paines with his Heart about this: now therefore try by these properties, whether you have heate in you, or no.

Obiect. Oh! but I cannot finde this Heat in me, I cannot finde these holy affections in my heart.

Answ. I answer, consider if thou findest any affections that are holy in thee, though not many: yea, if thou findest none, consider if thou hast not this smoake: for sometimes a man may finde that fire it selfe, sometimes onely this smoak, what is it? I answer, when you finde not the affections so moving as you see some others doe, yet you find in

in your selfe; carefulnesse, and watchfulnesse over your wayes, that thou wilt not run into sin, though thou canst not doe what good thou would'st: why, here is the smoake and some fire, though but small: *David* was not able to doe as he was wont to doe, to pray as he was wont; and therefore he praies God to restore him his spirit, and the joyes he was wont to have; but yet hee was carefull over his waies afterwards; And if thou find'st but this smoake, this care over thy waies, this resolution to commit no knowne sin, though thou find'st not the flame of holy affection, yet be not discouraged, thou hast that which is of the same nature within thee: Smoake is of the same nature with flame, for flame is nothing but smoake set on fire; and therefore take comfort, and continue constant still, till God inflames thee, and that is the third signe.

4 Where there is true grace wrought, there is combate and strife in the working; and afterwards *till hee bring forth judgement into victory.* Before victory, there goes a combate: this then is implyed, there must bee a strife. *The Disciples strove amongst themselves who should be the greatest in the Kingdome of heaven.* This is a property of all his servants: as Christs Kingdome is not of this world; so are they not apt to contend for any thing in this world. But you may know if you be Christs servants or no, if you contend for spirituall things. *Strive to enter in at the straight gate, for many shall seeke to enter in thereat but shall not bee able.* We see that there are two dispositions of

men, that some seeke, and are willing to goe to heaven, but take no paines for it, therefore seek, saith Christ, to enter, but shall not be able to get in: but others strive and contend with all their power; and such must be our strife if we will get into heaven.

Matth. 25.

The difference betweene the wise Virgins and the foolish lay in this, that the wise were more diligent than the other. For all professors may contend, but it is but for a fit, they are soone weary of this contention, they leave off rowing, and suffer the boate to goe downe the streame: but we must strive until we get the victory, and run with St. Paul untill we get the prize.

1 Cor. 9. 24, 25.

And what made him to do so? why he considered two things, first, he look't on the Crowne, an incorruptible Crowne. Secondly, he was loath to run in vaine, and lose all his labour: so the reason why we doe not contend, is because we doe not consider these two things, namely, the Prize and Crowne of reward, and that else we shall but lose our labour; and therefore we must strive: If we be remisse, it is an argument that we have a name to live, but are dead.

And therefore consider it, there must be a strife and a combate: and there will be that, by reason of that originall corruption that is in us: We have continuall work with our own Hearts; the flesh is ready to have the first hand in every businesse, if we doe not resist it: we shall exceedingly goe downe the wind, if we doe not strive, and that hard: For when there is an infused habit as grace is, and a corrupt nature contrary to it, nature

ture is ready to take part with it, which was bred and borne with it. *When I would doe good, evill is ſtill present with me:* there is ſomething lay as the fountaine head, as it were, and ſtopt him, when he would doe any good. It is our caſe alſo in well-doing we ſee how backward we are to begin, and when we have begun, how ready we are to leave off. But if it bee a buſineſſe that concernes our ſelves, wee are ready to doe, yea, to over-doe it: How ready we are to idle words, how backward we are to profitable conference; how ready to ſpend on our luſts, how backward to true liberality: and ſo I might inſtance in divers others. And therefore ſeeing we have this fleſh about us, we had need to ſtrive; it is that which a Chriſtian ſhould make account of, to doe that which hee hath not a minde to doe, and not to doe that which he hath a minde to doe, and ſo ſtill to doe the contrary, and ſtrive againſt the luſts of the fleſh, and ſo to reſtraine his nature from what he would doe. Rom. 7. 21.

But how ſhould we doe to contend thus? 1. *Objection.*

To give you ſome directions, *Fight the good fight of Faith:* The acting of our faith, and ſetting it on worke when any thing comes to hinder us, will helpe us to overcome in this combate. Let a man beleeve the promiſes and threatnings of God, and he ſhall be able to reſiſt the fleſh: but let faith be aſleepe, and it will quickly prevaile againſt us: *Take the ſhield of Faith:* Now, what a ſhield is for the defence of the body, that faith is for the defence of his ſoule. When any temptations *Anſw.* 1 Tim. 6. 12. Epheſ. 6. 16.

tions are suggested unto us, faith is it that repels them: never is a man overcome but through defect of faith, or when the habit lyes hid asleepe in us. *Heb.* 11. When they set their Faith on worke, what marvellous things did they? what made *Jeroboam* so weake? but onely want of faith: What was it that overcame *Eve?* but onely that she did not beleeve stedfastly the Word of God. On the contrary; what was it strengthned *Daniel*, the *three Children*, and infinite others? it was their faith. The Saints when they have the use of their faith, are very strong: but when they have not the use of their faith are very weake as other men: as *Abraham*, how weake was he, when he exposed his wives chastity for want of Faith? and *David* when he dissembled, and *Peter* when he denied his Master; but when he was strengthned through faith, how bold was he before the Counsell? it was his faith that enabled him to fight the good fight, because he kept the faith in the profession of it, and in the practice of it, and in teaching of it: and therefore if we would be strengthned to resist our spirituall enemies, we must labour to set our faith on worke, that is the first meanes.

The second meanes, S. *Peter* sets downe: *Dearely beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims abstaine from fleshly lusts which warre against the soule.* First, consider that you are but strangers and pilgrims: for if you take the pleasures in the world, you cannot sit by them, why? you are but strangers, therefore abstaine from them.

Againe, consider that these lusts they fight against

againſt the ſoule. No man in the world, that did conſider that ſuch a man now knocked at the door, whom if he did let in, would cut his throat, but that he would uſe all meanes to bar him out: why this now is our caſe; they ſeeke our lives, nay our ſoules; they fight, there is their force; they ſeek to prevaile by maine force if they can; if they cannot, then they ſeek to proceed by fraud and cunning: they are ready to perſwade us, that they are friends, and not enemies, and that you may go to Heaven though you yeeld to them, and that you may quickly overcome them; that if you ſatisfie them for the preſent, they will be gone, and trouble you no more, and a thouſand ſuch like: but take heed, fight againſt them, keep them out, not onely for the preſent, for they renew the battell; as an enemy if he be too weake at one time in one place he encreaſeth his forces, takes more advantages, and renewes his battell againe: ſo doe theſe, they will ſet upon us againe and againe with a freſh force, and if they cannot prevaile one way, they will trye another way, and if they cannot doe good by one, they will uſe all wayes.

And then conſider the end of this Fight, it is to kill and deſtroy, as we know the end of a fight is: Now theſe luſts they fight againſt your ſoule, and nothing will ſatisfie them but your life. Every time they ſet upon you, it is a buffering; every time you yeeld to them, it is a wounding, and if you doe not reſiſt and ſtrive againſt them, they will procure your utter perdition. And therefore

I beseech you be as strangers and pilgrims, abstaine from fleshly lusts which warre against your soules.

Obiect. 1 Yes, I could be content to strive, if there were any hope of doing any good: but I am afraid I shall be overcome, and therefore as good yeeld at the first, as at the last.

I answer, there is great hope, yea, assurance of victory, wheresoever true grace is, though it may be held downe long, and suffer many oppositions: yet in the end he shall be sure of victory, *till hee bring forth judgement into victory.*

A fift signe to know if there bee saving grace, yea, or no, if there be, it shall at last have the upper hand, but all through Christ: He that hath begun that good worke, will perfect it: For he will doe it, for hee is faithfull, and in him wee are rich: through him we shall be more than conquerours, not through our selves; we are apt to be discouraged, when we sit downe and consider what corruptions we have arising from our natures, which we thinke wee shall never master. True, wee cannot doe it in our owne strength, but Christ hath undertaken to doe it for us, he shall subdue our iniquities.

There are two things in the Kingdom of Grace, which when wee looke on, are apt to make us discouraged.

1 First, when a man lookes on his owne strength, and sees how little he can doe of himselfe.

2 Secondly, when he lookes on the Kingdome of Grace abroad, and sees how it goes downe the winde,

wind, and how the wicked prevaile, and the godly are weake, and goe to the wall: But Christ hee will afford us his strength against our lusts to subdue them, aud for the enemies of the Gospell, hee will trample them all under his feete; it is his promise, *Hee will bring forth iudgement into victory.* Now Christ doth this two waies: first by watering the buds, the seedes of grace, and maketh them to spring up as Willows by the water courses: *His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the Olive-tree, and his smell as* Lebanon: *they shall revive as the Corn, and grow as the Olive, &c.*

Secondly, by removing all these impediments, which hinder the growth of grace any way. And therfore now let us not be discouraged, but make use of these promises of Sanctification, which we are so apt to forget: And though we be as weake as a bruised Reed, or as the smoaking Flaxe, yet let us not faint, nor give over: but be encouraged to strive and contend without reasoning, seing we are sure the day will be ours; for so is his promise, *A bruised Reede shall hee not breake, and smoaking Flaxe shall he not quench, till hee bring forth Iudgement into victory.*

FINIS.

XUM